UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Theatre of the Lost and Found

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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of the

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Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves.
Henry David Thoreau

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ABSTRACT

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The Penwithen Boys were introduced to drama after Vita Nova, a community theatre group comprising recovering addicts, took *Scratchin' the Surface* to their school. It was a play that documented a young man's demise as he gets caught up with drug culture. This experience spoke to the boys.

The school invited me to make a play with the boys as I had done with Vita Nova. We created the play called *Til' it all Went Wrong***.** This play was performed at an International Conference at Exeter University in 2002. As a consequence, one of the participants at the conference, ignorant of the boys' backgrounds, invited the young people to perform at the Baltic Festival of Love.

Against what seemed like insurmountable obstacles the boys, teachers and volunteers, and myself made it to Latvia. It was a life- changing experience. This trip took place in 2002, now 19 years ago. Retrospectively this unplanned drama project can be seen as a unique case study in which to carry out a longitudinal study regarding the transformative effects of applied drama.

Why is it that some young people have their cards marked before their education even begins? My quest began as an attempt to track down the lost boys. I wanted to discover if the experience of the applied drama project had remained with them. As a passing memory or something more.

As my research developed I realised that I was also part of the study. This epiphany led to me taking an autoethnographic approach to the work, one which encompasses my role, as facilitator within the field of applied drama spanning over 25 years.
This thesis offers evidential weight to the importance of applied drama and theatre as an instrument of change and the possibility of hope.

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Can creating and performing a play really be transforming for socially excluded young men and other marginalised groups? Can that transformation last beyond the immediacy of the project? What remains?

Prelude

Maybe the need to find the boys is to do with the fact that I am lost. I think everyone is really. But there is a deep-down estrangement from my beginnings, separation from my mother, then my foster parents, and the children's home, and never knowing my biological father. I believe I underwent a form of early trauma.
It shouldn't be such a big deal; after all, I had loving adoptive parents who cared for me. When I did find my birth mother, we didn't connect in the way I had imagined and in fact, the bond I had with my adopted mother was extremely strong. I do have a dream that I might still meet my father. I hold onto some strange hope that we at least may have something in common.

I am fascinated when listening to poet Lemn Sissay, who was fostered, and to writer and poet Jackie Kay, who was adopted. Both are a similar age to me. Adoption was more prevalent when we were young, and both are mixed heritage. Although, as my adoption papers obsess about how pale I am and therefore 'stand a good chance of being adopted', I am from a mixed Anglo-Indian father and Irish mother; neither born in the UK.

But what relevance does this have to finding the boys? I think it is all to do with attachment; a yearning to bring things together. I also learned from my adoptive parents responsibility to others; not dropping people; unconditional love. This ethos probably makes adoptees particularly responsible to the people they care for and in a work situation hard, almost impossible to give up on a project. There is a deep sense of not letting people down. There is also another connection with my history and that of the boys. It is to do with identity. Subconsciously, for years I was searching for something to belong to and the Penwithen Boys and 'young' Darren were also looking to be part of something. Jackie Kay describes vividly the uncertainty of not knowing your roots:

> But though she knew she was loved, the question of her origins became more insistent as she grew older ... In her memoir she described the "windy place right at

> the core of my heart" and suggested that "the bundle of child that is wrapped up in the ghostly shawl of adoption does have another layer of aloneness". (Rustin 2012)

For me, finding the boys is almost a need.

Within applied drama practice, we have to remain distant from our 'clients' but there is also an element of humanity required to work with those who are hard to reach; relationships have to be formed, which means a certain giving of yourself. The Penwithen project wasn't a neat classroom experience, it was a project that involved negotiation, arguments, persistence. The students were extreme in their behaviour, and there was not the possibility as a teacher or facilitator of maintaining a neutral position.

Introduction

Why has a drama project with a group of lads from a hostel in Dorset taken on in my memory an almost mythical status?

It began in 2001. Our piece of theatre followed the story of a group of troubled teenagers involved in drugs and gangs. Dorset is not usually thought of as having such issues yet there were, and are, dislocated and disillusioned teenagers in the south, especially in rural towns. Watching *I Daniel Blake* I saw a parallel between Loach's film work and my very much less visible applied drama work in the field of social injustice. *I Daniel Blake* came at a significant time when I was doubting whether to continue with this task. His film jogged me into remembering that our work as drama practitioners has importance. Both film and drama use story to make unheard voices audible above the deafening noise of what some would describe as capitalist injustice.

The tragedy is that Loach is still making such films and I am still working on social inclusion projects. Over nineteen years later huge social divides still remain. To an extent nothing feels like it has changed. Looking back on my career I had an epiphany. I have been making the same kind of work albeit with different groups, funders and in different situations but essentially rooted in the same social inequalities. It was then that my supervisors suggested that my study was not just about the Penwithen Boys but about myself as an applied drama facilitator. The thesis took an interesting turn and is now autoethnographic. I had to not just interrogate the project but also myself. I became very much part of the story. The core of what we do as applied drama facilitators is: tell, act out and make theatre from our participants' narratives or, use story as a stimulus to evoke memory or the imagination. But do we ever really look deeply into our own stories and the profound impact they may be having on our practice and those with whom we work?

The key questions this thesis will address are:

1: What is it about the language of applied drama that speaks to those who are excluded and, in turn, gives them a voice?
2: What made this particular project so important? Why did space and time play such a significant part?
3: At the time the project had a profound effect on the participants, mentors and myself as facilitator. How can I make sense of the impact of the project 19 years later?
4. Are there lessons to be learnt? Recommendations both for facilitators and wider society?

The tale of the Penwithen Boys stands out because it was such an unlikely one. A group of young men all with criminal records took part in a drama project in Dorset after watching a theatre group of recovering addicts, Vita Nova [1]preform their play *Scratchin' the Surface*. As a consequence, they made their own play and found themselves being invited to the Baltic Bell in Riga with its theme for 2002 being The Festival of Love. They then actually went. Except one - Bradley. For the rest it was a miracle. It gave the ones who made it an opportunity to be someone else or maybe to be their ideal selves.

After participating in numerous applied drama projects, I can say that the path is not an easy one. John O'Toole in writing to me, noted the importance of including the failures as we can learn from them. That: "D*rama can act by reinforcing stereotypes, or alternatively opening doors that people aren't ready to have opened."* (O'Toole, 2019). Over the years tragically members of Vita Nova have died through the disease of addiction. One of the lads from the second tranche of Penwithen boys, who followed on in a similar drama project including visiting Latvia for The Baltic Bell Festival 2004, after being inspired by the original drama group, joined the forces directly after leaving school. He was one of the first men to be killed in Afghanistan, aged just 20. I discovered by chance, just a few years ago, that a very honest article had appeared in the Guardian about Phil printed in 2010 a year after his death. It outlines the positive effect on Phil's life of the combination of Penwithen and the drama project:

> Rifleman Phil Allen, 20, was killed by a bomb last November, six weeks after arriving in Afghanistan. Phil's behavioural difficulties became such that he was placed in Penwithen… … he never again attended a mainstream school. He left without any GCSEs … Phil decided to board there during the week, and the school transformed his life, (his Mum said) "It turned him around. It built up his confidence and his self-esteem because that had always been knocked. This school made him realise, 'I'm not stupid, I'm not dumb, I can do something.'… …Without that school …Phil told his mother he would have ended up in prison. Instead, he discovered acting and adults he could trust. He joined a theatre company while at school and took the role of a henpecked husband, impeccably straight-faced when the audience was in stitches. His school travelled to a drama festival in Latvia where he won a prize for best actor. (Barkham, 2010,)

These kinds of revelations have made me more pragmatic about what we do and how we measure success. This is a vital aspect of the work and it took me a long time to realise that

[1] Vita Nova: A community theatre group comprising people in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Set up in 1999 with Sharon Coyne at the Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts (BCCA) Their first play *Scratchin' the Surface* was seen by over 60,000 people mainly teenagers.

drama can only do so much. Often in the face of a successful project you can begin to think that this is the answer! We cannot change people's lives if people don't want change. My ego, and over-developed desire to 'help' in the past has led me to think that miracles can happen, but the stark reality over the years of a list of casualties has shown me that the answer can only ever be partly in a drama project. Bigger political changes have to take place that allow for a more healthy and equal society. Society needs to change.

What is known is the potential of drama work to create memories and pockets of intense creative engagement and friendships. The Penwithen Boys and Vita Nova were products of an unhealthy, dysfunctional society. I would argue that both projects continue to highlight and mirror that dysfunction and in so doing create dialogues for change.

With Vita Nova the experience was profound. As I was working alongside them, I was also learning about myself. I found I was able to relate to aspects of what the group described. So, when the group improvised certain scenes of their own lives, I could see glimpses of my own frailty; in particular the hammering of negative voices. The duality of outward confidence and deep insecurity were areas I could empathise with.

How was I as a facilitator with Penwithen? It was a different situation; with Vita Nova they were adults, so we were working on a more mutual footing. The lads were in a very different mind-set to Vita Nova. High energy and volatile. So, if anything it was more of a maternal relationship I had with them. This mother/woman situation was echoed by Eileen and Jan, their teachers. The addition of male mentors from Vita Nova was a powerful dimension that I will expand on later in chapter 4.

I have told and retold the Penwithen yarn that holds transformative magic many times because it is almost an allegory; how a creative act can break through all kinds of barriers and triumph. For myself, at that time, and for those who were working with me, the strong undercurrent for these young lads was one of systemic disadvantage. They were all diagnosed with Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and some with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD). During their weekly drama sessions in the now closed Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts (BCCA)[2] regular distributions of Ritalin occurred. They were in the

[2] BCCA: Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts 93,Haviland Road, Bournemouth BH7 6HJ. Home for Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team closed 2007.

main estate kids from Weymouth, mostly boarding at the hostel. Each had a catalogue of unfairness behind them. They all smoked, swore and had very incorrect political attitudes towards immigrants and women. Beside them was a young lad on work experience; Darren had been excluded long-term from main-stream school and had somehow found himself at the BCCA and joined in with rehearsals as my helper. Their mentors were all in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Some had come from the same type of backgrounds as the lads.

The boys from the bottom end of society became ambassadors for the UK at the festival, being met by the British Council in Riga. They journeyed to a place strikingly different in culture, were given good food and treated as special guests; not the kind of 'special' that they were labelled in the UK. In Dorset they were expected to behave badly and they generally worked hard at fulfilling this set of expectations. At the poetically named Festival of Love in Latvia, they became heroes. At least for a week they proved they could, in the right circumstances, be capable of achieving and being so much more than was generally expected of them. They moved into a liminal space.

As it was, the boys had undergone significant change here in the UK during their drama project. The trip to Latvia and being catapulted into a completely different zone, enabled a utopian experience to occur. This, in hindsight, makes for a fertile area of interrogation. As a model - the process of creating a piece of theatre inspired by them, seeing another play, *Scratchin' the Surface,* performed by an adult group of recovering addicts, Vita Nova, then touring their play to other locations, travelling to an alien place and potentially taking applied drama to another level.

The notion of storytelling and retelling has significance in this dissertation. I wanted to find out if the group have ever retold their adventure. What stood out for them? Had they recounted their experiences? Some events would have been completely hidden from myself and the other adults who accompanied us. Would they say? That applied drama saved their lives, that they were never the same again, have taken to regular visits to the theatre and holidaying in Latvia with their families? Or, that the whole thing had been a good memory, or worse, a lost memory? What remains of that profound experience in 2001/2? Through all these questions I was also deeply aware that, in encountering and talking to the Penwithen Boys, and those from Vita Nova, an ethical approach would be needed. Transparency regarding the process, ensuring that everyone who participated understood they were in

control of what was or wasn't included in the research was paramount. As a consequence I have only used the names of those whose permission I have gained within this thesis. (2.6 p 73)

However, in order for me to ask these questions, I first needed to find them, except for Darren the work experience lad, I had no idea where they were or what they are doing.

Whilst preparing to locate the lads, I set out a context for the project. This consisted of endeavouring to discover and analyse other longitudinal applied drama projects whilst also outlining my journey as a facilitator in the field of social inclusion. Since the acceptance of autoethnography as my methodology there was a need to include my personal story. Professor Ellis illuminates her understanding of autoethnography identifying how the process of self-analysis has the potential of a deeper understanding of those with whom we work.

> It asks that we rethink and revise our lives, making conscious decisions about who and how we want to be. And in the process, it seeks a story that is hopeful, where authors ultimately write themselves as survivors of the story they are living…
>
> In addition to examining my life, this approach has motivated me to love and care for others, equipped me to bear witness to their pain and struggles… it has increased my desire to contribute to the betterment of life and act on behalf of the good. (Ellis 2013: 10)

There is I believe proof that applied drama can effect change and can encourage creativity, but lasting change is so much harder to prove as the work must be viewed within a political context. For drama work occurring within the margins of society the setting is vitally important. Indicators for success are hard to quantify. Producing a piece of theatre can be judged aesthetically. The process of measuring the enduring impact is problematic due to assumptions. When engaging in social drama the suppositions, especially from funders, can be very high and that there is an almost 'cure' element attached to what can be achieved. For example, in December 2016 Ant took part in an Action on Addiction[3] Christmas play I was facilitating. He was a wonderful team player and took on a small role in our play; his second as he had relapsed previously and returned to rehab. It's not an unusual occurrence and gives an insight into the struggle with the disease of addiction. He was seen on the street recently by one of the group and it was clear Ant was using heroin again and

[3] Action in Addiction: This treatment centre is now called *We ARE With You*: Alcohol addiction – support for family and friends

desperate to get off it. As he stood in the cold he spoke to Jamie, who had also been part of the production. Jamie had continued his drama work, undertaking work experience with me at St. Aldhelm's Academy [4] and later played *Jesus i*n The Poole Passion. When Ant spoke to Jamie, he didn't ask for money but wanted to talk about how good the play had been, two years before. It was a very positive memory for him.

Was this success or failure? How can we measure such an outcome? Loach says about his filmmaking: "*A film is one small voice among other large ones. The film is a tiny part of the discourse. You do what you can but under no illusions of what a film can do."* (Loach, 2012) Drama can never be the answer to what are huge social and world problems, but can it be a voice, a dialogue for individual transformation?

Etherton & Prentki state that when considering the notion of the possible effect of applied drama in the quest for a better world: "*In order to contribute to a more equitable world, we, as applied theatre practitioners need to have ideas of how to reform our praxis in order to contribute to long term solutions.*" (Etherton & Prentki 2006: 143.)

It will be ground-breaking to discover if, nineteen years later, there is any evidence of a long-term effect on the participants of the project.

The Penwithen Boys project will be at the heart of this thesis as case study. The interviews will become vital data to analyse and make sense of their experience. These interviews will go towards making a contribution to evidence the relevance of applied drama as a social agent in reflecting injustice, offering possibilities for dialogue, and opportunities for transformation for individual participants. Woven into my account are references to other projects I have worked on in the field of applied drama, with reflections on my personal development as a facilitator with over twenty -five years of experience.
Longitudinal studies within the area of applied drama are sparse. This study offers vital material to narrow this gap.

[4] St. Aldhelm' s Academy Herbert Road Poole (formally Kemp Welsh)

Chapter One: My Story

This chapter will endeavour to give a context to my work with the Penwithen Boys and groups who fall mainly within the bracket of social inclusion. It is an attempt to see if my personal life has impacted on a career spanning over twenty-five years using applied drama. This period also embraces not only significant changes in education but also the sad reality that for the underprivileged, nothing has changed.

I recount my personal odyssey and my professional career. It felt instinctively right to place the Penwithen work into my on-going journey as a drama practitioner. Alongside this, I wanted to mark significant political change, in particular the period with the Penwithen boys, 2001-2002.

I have always known that this research was both political and personal; it matters to me. Autoethnography allows an acceptance of this personal position. This stance was upheld after reading John Struthers' thesis, *Analytic Autoethnography: a tool to inform the lecturer's use of self when teaching mental health nursing*? Although his hypothesis is not about applied drama, as its focus is on mental health, when I read his work, I began to see that Struthers' approach had resonance with my own work in as much as he was making a case for the importance of 'self' in the research when working with clients. I am not a therapist but the area in which I work often involves participants with mental health issues and those deemed vulnerable. There is an acceptance that the use of applied drama techniques within the context of social inclusion settings may have therapeutic benefits for participants. Much of my practice has involved those in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Some of the Penwithen Boys had definitely been involved with mind-altering substances.

> Addiction is often linked to mental health problems. If you have an addiction problem it may have started as a way to cope with feelings that you felt unable to deal with in any other way. (MIND 2016)

There is a strong link with mental health and marginalised groups.
I wondered if autoethnography could be seen as self-indulgent? but Struthers states:

> Although self-study has been criticized as self-indulgent, it could be argued that the suggestion that a researcher can bracket themself out of the research process is a more self-indulgent claim. (Buzard, 2003) (Struthers 2012 :39)

The more I reflect on these words, the more I see that analysing one's own timeline, journey, is in fact a necessity in order to make sense of our lives. Struthers posits that 'Where academics do develop self-awareness about their identity, Goffman suggests that they should disseminate such findings to others'. (ibid, 42) This statement virtually suggests a duty to share your journey and the impact it may have on teaching.

Could this also have relevance for facilitators of applied drama? Before moving on to my timeline, one example I have of sharing 'self' is now freely admitting that I am dyslexic. For a long time, I tried to hide this from students as I felt it showed some form of incompetency and failure. The feeling that stems from a childhood of undiagnosed dyslexia formed inside me a sense that I was being careless or stupid, that at times I could not spell very simple words. I then shared with a group of university students that I was dyslexic. After the lecture three students came up to me who were so relieved to hear a lecturer was dyslexic like themselves. So, they could identify with me and this gave them confidence.

To an extent without realising the label for it, I believe most drama facilitators are naturally involved in self-reflection. In fact, some practitioners use 'life maps.' Within drama settings 'story' is used to examine the human condition. Theatre in Education (TIE) group Big Brum[5], use a phrase when speaking to groups about their work, that theatre helps us understand 'what it is to be human.' Struthers also points out, when talking about the 'narrative visibility' of the researchers that:

> The process of undertaking an autoethnography may reveal to the researcher how habitual response patterns and avoidance of stigma, learned in early life may have developed to dysfunctional communication in adult professional life. Those individuals who display wounded healer scripts often enter employment such as the caring profession where putting others first is valued as a compassionate act." (Conti- O'Hare 2002) (Struthers, 2012: 43).

An understanding of 'self', of your development not just from a career point of view but from a human perspective, if acknowledged, has the potential to be very useful in the act of facilitation. Certainly, on reflection, one of the key revelations from working with Vita Nova was that through investigating their stories through drama, they were then able to use these stories in a very positive educational way. This altruistic act in turn was deeply important to

[5] Big Brum: Founded 1982 'Big Brum seeks to provide the highest quality Theatre in Education programme for young people across all age ranges and abilities. The company uses theatre and drama alongside young people to make meaning of their lives and the world around them'. https://www.bigbrum.org.uk/

the members of Vita Nova. My research showed it was one of their key motivators; making a negative a positive.

Through scrutinising my personal journey, I hope to make sense of my actions as a facilitator when working with the Penwithen boys. Pennington argues that there could be a need for teachers to undertake an autoethnography. "*Studying self-reveals sociocultural influences on the teacher's identity and practices that may require to be adjusted to provide supportive teaching approaches."* (Pennington, 2007)' (Struthers, 2012: 44)

The analysis of the Penwithen Boys in 2001 - 2 is partly connected to my professional skills at that time and also to how I perceived the world. How I am as a person is not neutral. I am shaped by my life's experiences. My wanting to know where they are and how they are faring in the world is personal. I am now relooking at the situation not only from the participants' perspectives but also from my own. Montgomery says of his research:

> I'm the one doing the telling. I'm the one asking the questions. I'm deciding where we go, what we witnessed. I think it's intellectually dishonest to pretend that's not the case. (Adams, 2015:133)

Will my story reveal why I have found myself walking on this particular road? Do my life's experiences mean that I am drawn to working with disadvantaged groups? Could there be challenges about working in a field that may in some way be fulfilling something that is absent within me?

Struthers describes his use of a timeline referring to other models of autoethnography:

> **Exercise: Timeline of subject's life events**
>
> My self is composed of all my life experiences, therefore my autobiographical timeline spans my life to date rather than being restricted to only my career. The timeline acts as a reference point to contextualise related aspects of my life's journey (Muncey, 2005). Ellis' (2004) review of the decision regarding her narrative of her abortion depicts how memory data may recapture decisions taken in the past but indicates that the same choices would not necessarily be made in present circumstances. Making different decisions at different times in a person's life reinforces the situatedness of data (Sandelowski, 2011). The timeline exercise is explicit in illustrating the alignment of my experiences with social, political and historical events to my use of self in teaching practices. (Struthers, 2012: 85)

I find the notion of time relevant to my own journey; how we react in different contexts. Looking back with gained experience, I may well have made different choices. I found

writing my personal timeline a challenge. There was internal conflict about what I should include. There is a vulnerability surrounding it. In *'Autoethnography'* Adams et al state:

> By telling stories - often vulnerable stories – about aspects of our identities and experiences, autoethnographers purposefully open themselves up to "criticism about how [we've] lived" and, as a result, of being "wounded or attacked". … Autoethnographers embrace vulnerability with a purpose," … "The exposure of the self who is also spectator has to take us somewhere we wouldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake." (Adams et al. 2015: 40)

1.1My Personal Path, Timeline:

Just when I was about to begin my autoethnographical story, I remembered that I had done it already, at least up to the age of 21. At Exeter University, we were set a project for the holiday; to make 'a collage of our lives'. I am afraid I did not listen properly to the task. The next instruction was 'on a piece of A3,' but I had already started to draw pictures in my mind. So, when it came to sharing our autobiography on paper, I had to get a taxi to bring myself and my project to the lecture. I had gone to town. I began in crayon and finished in oil as I traced out my turbulent growth with poems stuck into the collage of broken romances, my struggle with dyslexia and my brush with illness and death. Imagine my shock and embarrassment to see my fellow students with neat A3 posters with a gymkhana rosette fixed on it and a few lines about the Duke of Edinburgh award. My tutors put my life's collage of 'ups' and rather a lot of 'downs' on the wall. Brian Merrick, my English lecturer, said: "*A portrait of an artist."*

I will mark out the key influences in my life that I believe impacted me and to an extent, unwittingly, I may have brought into my practice. Holman Jones says:
"*Autoethnographers sometimes begin projects with personal experiences that they want to understand more fully, deeply, and meaningfully.*" (Adams et al. 2015:47)
Through the process of creating my timeline, it feels like a film rush of strong scenes coming to mind. Holman Jones explains that:

> Sometimes these experiences are *epiphanies* – transformative moments and realisations that significantly shape or alter the [perceived] course of our lives. Epiphanies create impressions that stay with us, recollections, memories, images and feelings," that persist "long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished. (ibid, p47)

It is useful that he makes reference to a range of forms of recalling the past. Some of my timeline is almost visceral, some subtle moments or puzzling detections of things not quite fitting in with the norm. Fragments of my life amplify deeply significant incidents. They are milestones that I have spent a great deal of time returning to over the years, trying to decipher events. Thinking about this, I realise there is a correlation between work I have facilitated, in particular the Vita Nova project and the Refugee Project, where participants have needed to return to old stories in their lives. With the Penwithen Boys, one session was dedicated to recalling their younger selves. (4.3.8 p 125)

1963: '*To begin at the beginning*' (Thomas 1954)

Sharon on Chesil Beach shortly after being adopted.

I was born in a home for unmarried women in Croydon. I stayed there with my birth mother for a few weeks. I then travelled with her on a train to Bristol Temple Meads. She told me that she cried throughout the whole journey and everyone commented on her lovely child. At the station, representatives from The Church of England Waifs and Strays Society met her where she, as a nineteen-year-old, handed me over and then got onto a train that took her empty-handed back to Birmingham where she had to pretend that nothing had happened.

I stayed in the home for a time, as my mother would not sign the adoption papers. I was fostered out to a family who wanted to adopt me. They were refused because they lived on a council estate. So, I returned to the home until eventually my mother signed and I was adopted by my parents, Joan and Bert, who had already adopted two boys, not blood related, from Barnardo's. They lived in a nice house and my father was a banker. My brothers-to-be were older, 18 years between my eldest brother who had left for the navy, and another brother who was 15 when I came home.

I have learnt that the first eight months of a child's life are deeply significant.

John Bowlby: Attachment theory of inherited trauma

I was very wanted and loved by my parents.

I was the youngest in the family. Both parents being only-children meant we didn't have uncles, aunts or cousins. So sometimes, I related more easily to older people than my peers and at times I felt a bit like an outsider.

Outsider.

I was told I was adopted when I was on holiday with my parents. I was about six or seven years old. It was wrapped up in a story. My mum said: "*Daddy asked me what I wanted for Christmas and I said a little girl and that was you."*

Then who was I? This was, I believe, the time when I first felt insecure. Things were not how I perceived them.

I cried a lot even though I didn't totally understand. My parents were my parents but not my parents.

Bizarrely, one day, my mum gave me a small tin of Heinz Curry. She intently watched me eat it and she asked if I liked it. I said I did, and then she said: "*That's probably because you are Indian*." I remember being puzzled. The statement just stuck there in my mind as odd, until about thirty years later.

1967: My grandfather, dad's side, a very intelligent retired London banker, calls me in to see flickering pictures of a man in a space suit walking on the moon. He very strongly said to me: "*That is not real.*"

My parents took me away from the local state school when I was about eight. I went to a convent, The Sacred Heart Preparatory School. It was the bottom end of the private sector, so there were very few resources, but mum said they had paid for a name. The school was all very nice, small and really apart from the world. We were all day-pupils and it took an hour to travel to school each day from home.

Sister Coletta took me under her wing. When I recited the poem *The Ride-by-Nights* by Walter de la Mare, Sister Coletta energetically marched me up to the office of the headmistress Sister Margaret Gillian. She asked me to recite the poem again. I did with my arms moving to the words. Sister Margaret, with no words of praise, said you mustn't wave your hands about: "*Hold your hands behind your back*." They sent me off to the Bath Eisteddfod. I finally won it a few years later. I have something I am good at.
I badly want to go to Mass. But, as a non-Catholic, I am not allowed. I make myself a rosary out of beads and an old palm cross. I also create a little altar in my bedroom. Sister Coletta gives me an old statue of Christ. He only has one hand!

Sister Coletta takes me up to London to meet her parents for an outing, knowing that at home my mum is absorbed nursing her sick mother. Her parents are so friendly, with beautiful southern Irish accents. Her father wears sandals and splashes me with holy water when they take me to their church.

My friend Jane's dad dies. I never met him but am very affected. I sit on a horsebox at break and can't understand how anyone can play! I feel different.

I have a best friend called Elizabeth. It is an intense friendship. She came to this country from Barbados.

Sister Coletta leaves and I am devastated and can't stop crying. Mum and dad somehow arrange for me to speak to her on the phone. This helps.

Not being able to cope with loss. I enjoy poetry and performing.
My life was fairly church-oriented and simple. I like the ritual. I felt safe in church. I liked the smell in St. Mary's Saltford. The older people there gave me a lot of time. Mr Sims spent ages telling me the history of the village and I enjoyed his stories.

My grandmother had lived with us always. I have warm memories of sitting in her room. We had a large house and she had her own sitting room with a fireplace that had cherubs at either side. On Saturdays on the black and white TV the wrestling and eating Abbey Crunch

biscuits. One afternoon we watched *Greyfriars Bobby*. I cried and cried about the man who dies and the dog grieving over his grave.
Granny tells my mother I had said some special things and she must be careful with me as: "S*he is too good for this world.*"

My grandmother one night, after a phone call, howls with anguish as she hears her cousin Winnie's only son has been killed in Vietnam. The grief is tangible in our home.
Grandpa dies in my bedroom. I am very sad.

Early memories of loss:

In the last few years of her life, granny had been completely bedridden with my mother devoting herself to her care. People were kind to me as my mum was consumed with her mother. Towards the end, my mother would ask me to just check the sheets were moving, that she was still breathing. When she died, my mother was utterly devastated. She adored, almost worshiped her mother. She found it very hard to overcome and was prescribed Valium.

Mother fixation-
an arrest in psychosexual development characterized by an abnormally persistent, close, and often, paralysing emotional attachment to one's mother.

My mum was inconsolable. She cried for her 'Nana'. She left granny's clothes hanging in the wardrobe. It was years until she could face clearing it out. She found it very hard to continue with life. A few times, I was asked to see her at night in her bedroom as she thought she was going to die and wanted to say good-bye to me.

Feelings of insecurity. That my mum might leave me.

I go to church regularly and am part of the choir. I go on my own. I am very young when I listen to a sermon about missionary Hudson Taylor at St. Mary's. I believe I have a calling. I want to be a missionary! I speak to the rector who invites me round to talk it through. When I tell my mum, she panics and makes me phone the rector and tell him I can't come. I couldn't understand her response. What's so wrong with wanting to talk?

Controlling behaviour. Latterly, I see a connection; a fear of her not wanting me to leave.

Secondary school proved difficult, as I had then undiagnosed dyslexia so it was a constant struggle with very few other opportunities for drama except being asked by a sixth-former to join them in the library to read *Under Milk Wood*. I love it. I recite on most open evenings. Art was my outlet although I loved English and History but my spelling let me down and I was constantly told I was careless. I tried very hard as I didn't want to disappoint my parents. Endless nights of my mother trying to get me to learn lists of spellings. She was excellent at English and couldn't understand why I didn't get it. She even used a ruler on my hands and legs, when she was infuriated. Not so often, but it certainly didn't help. This was something she deeply regretted later. I dread exams and the humiliation of having your name towards the end of a list. I won the 'effort prize' twice, which was a consolation prize really for trying but not getting very far.

I experienced a sense of failure and fear of getting spellings wrong and upsetting my mum.

Outside school, I was involved in Guiding; I'm a Sunday school teacher and life revolves around the church and village. I belong to young communicants and love taking part in the harvests plays, which I think are great because there are funny sketches written for us by a local schoolteacher. I went to dance classes, performed in pantomimes and shows but gave it all up to focus on schoolwork.

It takes a long time, but mum emerges from her sadness. She buys a Radio 2 t-shirt, loses weight and we go to Canada to stay with cousins. Besides holidays when I was very young, where my second eldest brother came too, all holidays are just my parents and myself. I am a semi only-child.

Close relationship with my parents. The three of us get on very well. My brothers are part of the family but my eldest brother has long left and my other brother is working and constantly going out. My mother loves literature and had wanted to be an actress but wasn't allowed. She ended up in the bank. She came into her own during the war, becoming a personal secretary to the boss of an insurance company. Later, marriage meant giving up her career. Like many women of her generation, she was not a natural housewife and was thwarted in not being fulfilled career-wise. I believe these circumstances had an impact on her focusing too much on myself. I increasingly became her project.

1979: A significant year. I was very ill at 16 and missed all my O levels, spending five weeks in an adult major surgery ward. I had two major stomach operations. I met two very important people who helped me through. A woman called Rerrie who had spent most of her life in

India and a nun called Theodora who had also spent time in India. My encounter with both these women was very significant. I emerged changed.

I went to Bath Technical College to take the O levels. I loved it there; freedom and amazing arts facilities. I decided that I wanted to be a ceramic artist or an actor.

My father retired and we moved to Bournemouth, which had always been a dream of my mother's as her family came from Dorset. When we moved, my life was shattered. We went to Bournemouth where I didn't know anyone and frankly it felt soulless; not a city like Bath or Bristol, just large houses with huge hedges. The consolation was that we were near the sea and my mother's cousins. I completely embraced mum's hunt for her family tree, gladly wandering around graveyards with her and, even though there is no blood connection, I felt connected to the landscape of Abbotsbury where many of her ancestors lay.

I was now out of education as I had sat O levels in the autumn. So, I got a job firstly in a camera shop and then at Compton Acres tearooms.

Finally, I went to a FE College. There was no ceramic art there, so I took Art, English and Theatre studies. I felt like an outsider. I had never met really worldly people before. I had been quite sheltered. I wanted to leave. I didn't. It turned out to be an excellent drama course.

My English teacher was wonderful. He cried when reading Joyce's, *The Dead*. He recognised within two weeks that I was dyslexic. I went to an educational psychologist. He put me through lots of tests. He said categorically I was dyslexic. I told him I was careless. He said he would give me a statement and that I had a high IQ, just below very superior.
When I was 18, I met and fell completely in love with one of the actors from Brownsea Open Air Theatre (BOAT), who was a student, away from the area except during the university vacations, who played in a punk band. It was a short romance but for me it was mind-turning. "*A knowing moon and a naïve girl." (*Coyne, 1981). All the sadness of illness came out in love for him. When he kissed me on the boat returning from Brownsea Island, I just remember thinking 'I want to die'. After the end of show party, with his guitar in hand, he said dramatically: "*I'll walk into the night alone*." I felt so lost. It was like a sickness. He had the same name as the lost love in Joyce's *The Dead,* which I was then studying for English. Some thirty years later, unexpectedly, I met up with him again at the 50th celebration of BOAT. How strange life is. He has enjoyed a successful career and remains involved with the theatre: we have remained friends.

Up until then, life had been reasonably straightforward and my relationship with my parents was solid and loving. True they were over-protective but then I had been ill and they thought they might lose me. I confided in them completely.

A struggle happened when I was 19 that I had not predicted and which had a major impact on my life. I was offered a place at Homerton, Cambridge. I had thought there were 20 places. At interview, a packed room of prospective candidates were told that there were only 10 places. This totally relaxed me as I thought I didn't stand a chance. I was offered a place. It was then that I realised my mother had some issues that she had not worked through. Instead of being happy, it became very apparent that she didn't want me to go to Cambridge, or anywhere. I didn't understand it at the time. I just couldn't make sense of why, when she had supported me in everything and heralded my successes - 'lived through me' as she would say - that she would not be delighted. She actively tried to keep me at home, encouraging a relationship that I was unhappy in and wanted to end. My mother was worried that I was too serious with my work. She was of another generation, being born in 1914. She didn't want me to be 'an old maid'. So, when I turned the man down, she encouraged me to phone him. But after knowing what it was to be in love, I knew that I had no feelings for him. I told my mother that this boyfriend was putting too much pressure on me to have a physical relationship, at the time such a relationship was also against my then beliefs and values. To my astonishment, instead of supporting me, she also put pressure on me to continue the relationship. I was deeply confused and just wanted to concentrate on my A levels. She genuinely thought she was serving my best interest and I believe she was trying to be modern. It was a mess, disastrous. I was so unready. The impact of staying in the relationship had consequences for years to come. Her hope was that we would marry and settle down nearby and have children. I loved her so much but couldn't comprehend why she was so unhappy, why she could not be happy for me, and why my being physically near was the only option for her. She wanted me within a five-mile radius. I was locked in this relationship for a year. I hated it. Subconsciously, I was married. My mother had also been very sheltered and had no understanding of what this person was like. She was trying to do the right thing. I know this. She could only operate within cultural English expectations, that a family, especially a daughter, should be close by. Thankfully, he had no intention of marriage and he finished it. I say thankfully as I would have found it impossible to end the relationship, even though that was what I wanted. Years later, my mother described it as almost madness. Of course, when my own son left for university, I had some real awareness of that feeling of a child leaving the nest. But I hope I learnt from the experience and I did my best to let go. Much later on, I realised this was all to do with my mother's attachment.

She could not face me leaving her. If you enter her mind-set at the time, very much a product of her generation, her desperate actions make some sort of sense. She wanted us all close and this blinded her to the consequences if the plan failed, as it did. She had only wanted to be close to her mother, who was described to me by my father as very strong. My wanting to go away was seen as not loving her enough. If I loved her, why would I leave? Nothing I could say, at that time in her life, would have shifted her. We were able to reconcile and talk about these events later in life. I admire my mum deeply for being able to change and to say sorry. Not many people can do that.

Empty nest syndrome. People pleasing. Looking back, I started to compromise on my wants to please people. At times, I felt I had no choices. In later encounters I was indecisive, unable to make clear decisions. I felt I had to run my ideas past others for approval.

Epiphany:

When I first wrote my timeline, I had left this whole deeply personal section out. I felt its inclusion would be a betrayal of my mother. My husband said: "*Why have you left the most important bit out? It's the story you always go back to*."

He was right. Of all the things that have happened to me in my life, this one episode had the most marked impact. I have spoken to counsellors about it. I didn't like what they said, as again it felt like I was being disloyal.

A sense of guilt and the shame of speaking about problems was very big for me, although I am by nature a very expressive person. But my mother frequently warned me about telling others outside of the family about personal things. This was very much an echo of her generation. In a way, she was also my confessor. I told her everything. I took things way too seriously. My parents wanted to save me from making mistakes and, as a consequence, I made them all the time.

Yet these events did happen and at the time it was catastrophic, because all that I had thought that I could trust, and was solid, had shattered. My expectations of what I thought my mother would be saying, my simple moral stance regarding relationships and marriage were broken. It felt like no one was listening.

After many years I went to see a healer. I hadn't prepared what I was going to say and didn't even know why I was there particularly. I found myself crying for this loss, of innocence, that happened when I was nineteen. In so many aspects of my life I have moved on and carried

on with my life and work, but it was that incident I spoke about to the healer who softly said: "*It wasn't your fault.*"

Many times, when working with those in recovery, I found participants were stuck on stories within their lives that were not fully worked through. I also found that out of the people I worked with in Vita Nova, a significant percentage had also been adopted or fostered. Within the Penwithen Boys group several lived in a hostel and at least one was fostered.

Epiphany: could this timeline process actually give me closure?

So, when I didn't get into Homerton because I needed a Maths O level, I didn't question it as I was in such turmoil. Instead, I went through clearing and ended up even further away, in Nonington College for Performing Arts (part of the University of Kent in Canterbury). I gave up after the first term although it was an incredibly creative course, but in a really remote place and I didn't think I could face being cut off for three years.

I decided to take my maths O level and try again for Exeter. I took my place there in the autumn and it was life changing. It was the freedom of being away and in an incredibly nurturing and intense drama department. I became politicised. I found a vocabulary for my socialist approach to life. I felt it was the right place to be. The opportunity to put on your own plays was the highlight for me. Mum seemed to have settled down about my leaving although she expected a phone call every day and a return to home as soon as term was over. She marked the days off the calendar.
I made two plays while at Exeter using large choruses: *Hamadryad* – about the loss of innocence and *Reunion: The Father Returns to The Son*. Looking back, both were about confusion and being trapped.

Working on a Theatre in Education (TIE) project at Coldharbour Mill, Uffculme, was also deeply important, as this was when I realised that theatre could also be vocational. TIE was the perfect marriage of fulfilling my dreams of acting whilst working on issues of importance.

Theatre in Education (TIE) at Coldharbour Mill, Uffculme 1984

As first year drama students we were offered the opportunity in taking part in the third year drama project.

It was during this experience I discovered that TIE offered the possibilities of not only dressing-up but doing something useful.

I know my parents were proud of me going to Exeter; very proud.

My inability to let go became apparent in connection with romantic relationships, even when I was unhappy in a situation. I believe this was connected to being given away when I was a child, I was very intense and always in a relationship. In my third year, my mother put a stop to a relationship. I had foolishly confided in her about it. I had lost all sense of boundaries; what to tell and not to tell. She made me cut my hair. I was about 22.

Deep insecurity. Having to get permission from others about decisions. Not trusting my own instincts.

All was going well in my final year. But as my mother was literally marking the days off until my return, I fell in love with a lecturer who had been seconded from a local secondary school.

He was political, Irish, and about to become divorced. My mother went mad. I went for a job at a comprehensive, Vincent Thompson's School, Exeter, although what I really wanted to do was make and put on plays. But I went for a job to please him while pretty confident I wouldn't get it, as I hadn't quite graduated and they had a strong internal candidate. When they offered me the job at the interview, I didn't know what to say. So, I said: "Yes." I went out and cried. My mother was heartbroken. I was confused. But I actually loved the job and wrote plays for the students. In my last year there, even though it was a so-called 'sink school', we got highest marks in all of Exeter for drama. The students performed a play I wrote for them, *Carved In Granite,* so that everyone, fifty in all, would have a speaking part.

I took too many pills one day as I could not stand the unrelenting pressure for me to return home and the lack of acceptance of my then boyfriend. I didn't want to die; I just wanted it to be quiet. It didn't help. He was very angry with me and she had more reason to have me back.

Here's a bit of superstition; in Llandrindod Wales I had a gypsy fortune-teller read my hand. She told me not to cut my hair and there would be a lot of packing and unpacking. She said she wouldn't like to be in my shoes because I was being pulled from two sides. Could she see or was it chance? I ended up packing up and handing in my notice as teacher in charge of drama without a job in line. The students I taught were really sad when I left. I had become attached to them. I felt I was really letting them down. In an insane compromise over distance, my mother says that Weymouth would be all right, midway between Exeter and Bournemouth. To me this is better than a five-mile radius. My parents helped me find a flat.

I sink my savings into it and, as the market is very competitive, I find myself again having to make a decision on the spot. I agree. I try to get a job there and get short-listed, but don't get it. My boyfriend, not unsurprisingly, doesn't want to live in Weymouth. Property prices crash. I can't sell it so have to rent it out. I reluctantly move back home.

Feeling I didn't have a choice. Trapped. People pleasing and compromise adapting to situations. I enter into the upside-down scenario.

I go home. I was not a great human being. I was resentful and angry. I went out a lot. I should say that it was not just me who was caught in the middle. My lovely gentle father was stuck, trying to pacify my mother and myself. One day, totally out of character, he smashed a plate. I tried then for my dad's sake to be better. But it's hard living back at home after being away; but things did settle. The bottom line, outside these problems, as a family we got on, enjoyed each other's company and loved each other deeply. Fortunately, I managed to get a job with the then Drama In Education Team – later to become BTIE. I love my work and have good friends around me. It's an ideal job for me!

Attachment, over-developed sense of responsibility

He asked me to divorce my parents. I couldn't.

Was I part of the problem?

The relationship with the Irishman could not withstand the pressure. He did not follow me down to Bournemouth. Time passed, I felt trapped. I pressed him to come. I finished the relationship and started seeing other people. He desperately tried to get me back each time with promises that he would come. His intensity to get me to recommit to him is not unlike my mother's. I feel compromised. I am upsetting, hurting other people, finishing with them to return to him; I am snatching at happiness. Finally, we got engaged. My family finally accepted him. I broke it off. It was dead. I knew in his heart that he didn't want to leave where he worked. Years of backwards and forwards were over.

On the rebound and on Prozac I go on holiday with my parents as they are frightened of leaving me on my own. I meet a PhD student there. I fall out of the frying pan and into the fire. In a whirlwind I marry a Kenyan. Not all was a disaster. I wasn't thinking straight. I didn't want to get married; particularly as deep down I was not in love although I did like him very much. But so traumatised by the last years, I thought it would all work out. He was insistent to marry and happy to live close to my parents. The marriage resulted in my getting to know

Kenya. When I first visited Kenya, it was a profound experience. I was greeted by a massive family, so different from my small family at home. There was an outpouring of love. I was taken into the tribe through a ceremony. Animals were slaughtered in honour of my first arrival, a challenge for a vegetarian. The meat wasn't wasted but happily eaten by others who rarely could afford it. On my first visit into the highlands, mobiles had not taken off and there was still no electricity or running water. I was for many the first white woman, *Mzungu,* they had seen and certainly the first one to stay in the village.

Was I searching for an identity?

Gradually, as I got to know this virtual stranger, I saw that I had made a great mistake. It was like a terrible novel. After the debacle of their previous interference, my parents felt unable to say anything. My relationship with my parents was really strong again. I had a son, Muiruri. I was instantly and completely in love with him. He is the closest blood relative I have ever met. When he was born, my parents now in their early eighties, for the first time in their lives held a newborn child. They both adored him.

My mother said that she wanted me to find my birth mother. She said she couldn't have done it before, as she was 'not secure enough'. But she was now. I admire how my mum was able to be honest and grow constantly as a human being. That is what made her such an amazing person. She was someone who had human frailties, but also had a deep capacity for love, kindness and generosity. So, like the start of a drama workshop, my father disappeared upstairs and brought down a black box with my early beginnings within it.

My mother was Irish and my father an Anglo-Indian. When I read this, I immediately remembered the Heinz Curry comment. My adoption papers were racist. On nearly every page it said: "*Sharon has a good chance of being adopted as her father is fair skinned*."

Even though I had permission to find my mother, it was something I didn't feel I could do before, as I didn't want to upset my adopted mother. It's a common phenomenon with adoptees. It took me a few years before I tried to find my biological mother.

I discover on this journey that I have a sister who was also given away. This did not fit into my imagined scenario. I find my sister before I find my mother. We have different fathers. Finding her has been a wonderful gift. Ironically, her adoptive mother had changed the name our mother had given her to 'Sharon.' Unbelievable. I finally speak to my biological mother, Karen (not her real name). I hear her Irish accent and it's like a deep ache inside. I

had been instinctively drawn to Ireland. When, in my early 20s I went to Ireland to follow the footsteps of J.M. Synge, I had embraced Irish music and literature. This was alien from my family. I also experienced a massive jolt of d*éjà vu* on the boat over to Ireland. I felt I was going home. I learn from Karen that my entrance into the world was extremely hostile. She was called terrible names by the women in the unmarried mothers' home and was made to work. When she tells me, I have a flashback to visiting my friend who had just had a baby. The first time I had seen a new-born. I couldn't wait. I saw the little girl with cards and joy around her. I left the hospital bay and nearly collapsed as a bout of sorrow from supposedly nowhere overcame me.

Karen answers the on-going question mark; we don't have so much in common which is surprising. We get on but there is no real connection. My adoptive mother and I have so much more in common, a deep understanding. Karen unsurprisingly is damaged. At times, it's like walking on eggshells, but my sister and I manage to sustain a relationship with her. We both feel deep compassion and love for her.

I stayed too long in the marriage, always looking for ways to blame myself. I don't think I could face telling people about it because of all the fuss from breaking up with my previous partner. Ironically, I was chair of the local Amnesty International group and one night, in the midst of a hellish situation, I remember thinking I could write for myself. The marriage was abusive. I took too many pills; again, not wanting to die but just because I couldn't handle the pressure. I drove myself to hospital and had my stomach pumped. I told them my husband kept saying I was mad. I drove home and went to work the next day. My work experience student Darren who was later to become part of the Penwithen project said: "*Sharon you look like death.*"

Feeling I didn't have a choice. Trapped. People pleasing and compromise.

My working life was full and creative; work sustained me. I was going to international conferences. In my work I was strong and confident. I had a purpose.

My relationship with my family was wonderful again, but my lovely father was getting ill.

During this I was involved in *Give Us A Voice*, a refugee project.

1999: Around this troubled time I set up Vita Nova.

Finally, my marriage ended with my having to run away with my son. After staying with friends, I freely went to my parents' house and stayed there with Muiruri. I was so glad to be home.

2001: I began work with Penwithen

Inability to let go is critical. I wait until it is impossible before I actually leave, literally praying he will leave me. I blame myself for things. The doctor suggests a psychologist. He says he doesn't usually tell people what to do but I must not go back. He says I have an over-developed sense of responsibility.

Work was a place where I could be in control. I am helping people in my work, yet I am going home to chaos.

These situations lead to empathy and wanting to protect and help. But when I was working with Penwithen and Vita Nova, it was at times at a personal cost.

I met Martin who was in early recovery and a professional photographer from Scotland. He wanted to be involved with Vita Nova. I asked him to take pictures of our second piece, *The Mule*. We became friends and eventually partners. He knows the package - ailing parents and a little boy.

My father died. I am heart broken. I am with him when he leaves this world.

One day, I am waiting for a train and my legs give way with grief.

I set up *The Poole Passion* in a response to my father's death.

I live with my mother. I admire how she is able to talk and we resolve the past. We have both grown up. Love has been a constant even in strife.

I finally leave to set up home in Southbourne. She suggests it; but this time it was me that doesn't want to leave her.

Before the birth of my little girl, I asked the priest if she could perform a ceremony for me so that I could let go of the past. She prayed for me and anointed me in the Lady Chapel and I felt my late father's presence.

My second child, Gabriel, is born. I worry before she is born, how will I be able to love a second child as intensely as the first. As soon as she is born, I understand it is possible, that the heart is boundless.

Mum becomes very ill. I spend the last days at her side reading her favourite poems:

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

(Frost 1922)

…and her own autobiography that is beautifully written about her idyllic childhood with her parents and little dog. It's easy to see how she must have thought that time would have lasted forever. I remembered years before, her describing losing her own father. Death is so final, she said. Their little unit was destroyed from that moment. Her mother then came and lived with her and my father and two young boys, long before I arrived on the scene.

I am with her when she dies. I feel utterly lost.

I write both parents into the passion play, *Through the Eyes of a Child*.

I get made redundant from BTIE a few months after my mother's death. This is a big challenge. I have spoken to my mother nearly every day of my life and now she has gone. I miss her terribly. A gaping void. My work that sustained me, when everything was in chaos, has gone. My brother who lives locally announces he is moving to Wales.

But I get through. Thanks to Martin, the children and wonderful friends. I begin work at Action on Addiction and get a phone call to work at Winchester University on the Applied and TIE Modules.

Work finishes at Winchester. I get a part-time job at St. Aldhelm's Academy, a very challenging school, not unlike Vincent Thompson. I continue my freelance work. In 2018, I am asked to return to Vita Nova. I think hard about it. But decide to return alongside school and the freelance work. Lunacy. Maybe I am going full circle!

The notion of certainty is something I now accept as being in many aspects of life illusion.

Best not to hold on too tightly.

2021 my DNA results prove that I have no English blood at all. But also reveal that I am not Anglo-Indian and therefore my putatively named father is not my father; instead I am the child of an unnamed man of Cypriot descent. After twenty-five years of living with one story I have to unlearn it.

1.2 Bridge

Drawing the map after making the expedition reveals at times a complicated and confusing route.

Before moving on to my professional life I need to reflect on my personal timeline. Ellis, when interpreting meaning from fieldwork, asks a couple of key questions: "*How do you tell the story of yourself within/ alongside a story of culture?*" and "*What is going on here?*" (Adams et al, 2015, p66)

I am not sure at this point how fully I can answer those questions. The absurdity of my journey comes through. It was mad. My mum needed professional help at the time for her to work out her relationship with her own mother. She did get there in the end. The situation happened. It caused me pain. I never stopped loving her. She never stopped loving me. I can understand her viewpoint, even if I don't fully accept it. I know the situation also caused her extreme pain. I can see how I also entered that world of insanity as well. I did have choices, but I didn't think I had. I wasn't strong enough. Crucially we forgave each other.

The major element was that with all the 'stuff' going on, I was still functioning on lots of other levels. Mainly the creativity of my work and maybe my ability to adapt from a young age, as when my grandmother was so ill, meant that I was able to find a life outside home and that has helped me in working situations.

Many adopted children, like myself find it easy to communicate quickly with strangers, as there is a necessity to fit in and be liked. A useful skill when working with groups.

I can see clearly blatantly obvious themes. This is where a timeline can clarify and extenuate a recurring theme such as 'loss' and a fear of abandonment. An inability to let go is a form of attachment. Not being able to make decisions in my personal life.

Naivety

Dyslexia

I love stories

Religion/Ritual

Loss of trust

People pleasing

Abandonment issues

Shame

A dichotomy of insecurity and confidence.

I want to be an actress

Creativity is an outlet for inner struggles.

As I write this list, of my traits, I have an epiphany. These are nearly all the words I have used to describe the groups I work with, especially the recovery groups although I am not an addict. But I can empathise and relate to groups because of some of my experiences. I do know what it is to be in a chaotic situation where choices become blurred; where you find yourself part of the madness and that you can be hurt and also responsible for hurting others.

One last memory; Marcia Pompeo[6], theatre practitioner from Brazil, came to look at my work with Vita Nova and a group of very difficult teenagers. The project was called *The Edge*. She was amazed how their little performance came together almost from nothing. Then she said: "*Where are you in all of this?*"
Her words penetrated me. I really didn't know the answer. I think, in hindsight, my answer would be: 'hiding.' Hiding in my work. Work was the thing that held me. Where I was in control. Where I was able to channel my emotions and express myself. I think it saved me. Stopping work, however, became a bit of a problem.
I am now ready to move on to the next section.

[6]The late 'Dr Marcia Pompeo (Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina) 'one of the pioneering scholars and practitioners of community theatre in Brazil.' (Prentki, 2019).

1.3 My Professional Path: Timeline

In this section, I link into the political context of specific times and discuss attitudes towards social inclusion. I also attempt at junctures to connect some of my personal journey to my professional one.

Why has a succession of governments failed to embed drama firmly within our education system? Why the huge failure to recognise the true worth of drama, its ability to engage, culturally enrich, to encourage independent thinking and place it firmly in the curriculum of all schools and, importantly, in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)? Tragically we are witnessing more cuts instead of increases in educational drama work, especially in universities where drama within teacher training has been consistently reduced over the years. Why isn't anyone listening? However, there is no evidence of the high-end private sector cutting back the arts in their institutions.

The political and personal in this research are interwoven. My working life spans Margaret Thatcher's: "*There's no such thing as society," (*1987); John Major's proclamation that Britain had achieved: "*The classless society,*" (1991); Tony Blair's declaration that: "*The class war is over,*" (1999); David Cameron's leadership speech: "*There is such a thing as society, it's just not the same thing as the state,*" (2005); Theresa May's statement: "*I'll use the power of the state to build a fairer Britain,*" (2016); and currently Boris Johnson's: "*We are going to do it. We are going to do it together. One thing I think the coronavirus crisis has proved is that there really is such a thing as society,*" (2020). Johnson's words are seemingly a contradiction to Thatcher's famous phase of 1987. It just leaves the question whose society? Who are the 'we'? I have witnessed through my work little evidence of 'together', but a great deal of division, separation and alienation.

How then can drama make a difference to those who are shut out? How can we bring people back inside or at least open the door for them? Many of the questions I have asked throughout my career are still unanswered and feed into this research: such as the impact of labelling and low expectations. My hunch has grown stronger with every applied project I have undertaken; in particular, the notion that drama has the potential to create a truly integrated society. Drama as a passport to meet those beyond your experience, and therefore break down social barriers. This area is still under-appreciated. It is at times necessary to have discrete groups of people working together as there is a mutual

understanding at some level of each other's situation: such as vulnerable women, ex-prisoners and recovering addicts. Those groups need nurture. However, I have also come to understand that there is also a time when, in some cases, staying within the constraints of such a group for too long may become insular and, at times, a 'victim mentality' can arise or a sense that they are stuck and not able to move beyond that one grouping.

I discovered, firstly in my work teaching in secondary schools, that creating a play can give huge strength to individuals as they take part in a creative endeavour. Later, I observed whilst being with BTIE that making theatre with so-called marginalised groups and then going into the community and sharing those plays allowed important dialogue to take place. It was because of such an event, with Vita Nova taking *Scratchin' the Surface* into Penwithen Boys, that their project began. In recent years, especially with The Poole Passion Project, I have found that after individuals within identified groups have gained their confidence, there are huge benefits from filtering those people on into other more open, integrated drama groups.

Besides governments changing, politically correct names have changed for various groups, as have the names of the actual drama practice…working with marginalised, excluded, social inclusion, participatory drama, inclusive and applied. But, essentially, the participants, the underclass are the same. For this study I will refer to my practice as applied drama:

> It is our view that applied theatre is by definition a political activity because it is about interventions that attempt to make changes in power relations among individuals and within societies. (Etherton & Prentki 2006: 150)

In the light of this, my case study of The Penwithen Boys is now extending into a much bigger picture, a collage of my working life dedicated to applied drama. I have seen sweeping changes: the demise of the dream of Comprehensive Education, the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 that omitted drama as a core subject, cuts that saw the collapse of local authority funded TIE groups, including BTIE, arts centres closed and fewer higher education institutions training specialist drama teachers/ facilitators. There is a sense that drama is systematically being bludgeoned out of society.

1.3.1 Teaching Practice

On teaching practice back in 1987, I wrote a paper called *Look out for Ryan!* My whole study was based around one teenager called Ryan and how the school perceived him and how, in turn, he perceived himself.

> I was told before I went into a particular classroom whilst on teaching practice to look out for Ryan: "*He's a troublemaker, the disruptive influence in the class. He's on school report. You know he has a criminal record. Of course, he comes from a difficult home. They live on a council estate. Ryan gets sent into the Community Home every so often. If you have problems with him just send him out."*
> However much I tried when I entered the classroom, I could not help being influenced by what I heard. Subconsciously I was looking for trouble, waiting to crush my potential disrupter. My perceptions of him had been marred before I had even seen him. Ryan, spiky–haired and kicker-booted, sat slumped over his desk no doubt waiting for me to attack. After all the best form of defence is attack. I remember thinking when he stood up, playing the role of deviant and parading arrogantly down the classroom how absurdly small and boyish looking he was. He was thirteen or fourteen and was already a professional deviant. The school and social services had isolated him as being a deviant and he had inwardly digested his title and so had acted accordingly.
> "I *wonder how many Ryan's our schools churn out every year*?" (Coyne 1987)

We don't use the word deviant these days. It is however striking to me how incongruous and judgmental that word is. On the other hand, Clough (Clough 2011: 3) says it was only forty years ago that the word 'maladjusted' was coined. Currently the term is 'challenging behaviour,' which is of course better as it separates the behaviour from the individual, although it does beg the question who is challenged by the behaviour. Why can't there be an acceptance that not everyone can fit into formal education and a radical, more kinaesthetic approach is required. But beyond changes in terminology, I have personally seen hundreds of Ryan's over the years. In the case of The Penwithen Boys, they were physically separated from mainstream education and placed in a hostel. In the case of Ryan, he had been placed into a 'holding group' within mainstream. The effect was similar. In both cases the young people were labelled as 'naughty boys' and ostracised. Neither situation is inclusive in the true sense of the word. Barton's observation remains real:

> For me inclusive education is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, and that end is creating an inclusive society … this is well beyond an issue of disablement; it is about the removal of all forms of oppression. (Barton interview, 1998, as cited in Clough 2011: 16)

I have viewed young people and adults failing in society because society has never truly

removed the barriers that have held people back from succeeding. These constrains are not just financial; they are about aspiration, cultural understanding and entitlement.
I have had a kind of inverted admiration for the Ryan's of this world, perhaps because I was so compliant when at school. Perhaps that's what has kept me in the field; a form of delayed anarchy. Their complete lack of recognition for any kind of authority. At the 'sink school' where I used to teach in Exeter, a certain Shane Fitzgerald would enter the drama room like a cowboy. Always late for dramatic effect, kicking the door open with panache, constantly on report, yet he took to drama. Drama can absorb and work with egos as well as build up those who lack in confidence.

My experience of school was so far removed at the bottom end of the private sector; a convent to produce 'nice' young ladies. The nun whom I asked if I could do woodwork nearly fainted. There was no drama on the curriculum. We did not ask questions either, we were dutiful and respectful and totally unprepared for the 'real' world. It never crossed my mind to just get up and leave the interminable history lessons of Sister Helen who would happily spend a whole period investigating the index of the textbook. But Shane Fitzgerald, Ryan, Darren and any of the Penwithen Boys would have been out within five minutes.

Finding groups of completely switched off young people on teaching practice was a revelation. The lives of others. Where the hallowed educational experience was something to be so easily rejected. That teaching practice where I met Ryan was in a class named 4Z! It was the beginning of understanding that out there is a whole subculture. That was in 1987 when I was an undergraduate. Now, in my 50s, that disaffected subculture is still there. In the school where I currently teach, our major battle as teachers is apathy, low aspirations and a deeply entrenched lack of respect for education, to the extent that in some cases you could describe it as wilful ignorance. If anything, the situation over 30 years has grown worse. A society that still marks the cards of some and gives free entry to others. Back then when writing about Ryan, I was referencing Rutter and Giller:

> In essence, the basic premise is that delinquent behaviour is a result of social induced pressures and, in particular, that it results from the strain caused by the gap, or anomic disjunctive, between cultural goals and the means available for achievement of these goals. Young people in the lower social strata experience frustrations from the lack of opportunity to participate in the rewards of economic success. (Rutter and Giller 1983: 245)

These words could be written today omitting the word 'delinquent'. I was then also drawing from Paul Willis. He said, more optimistically: *'…profane creativity shows us the only route for radical cultural change."* (Willis, 1978: 1)

1.3.2 Undergraduate – volunteering, workshops with ex-offenders.

As an undergraduate, I also worked as a volunteer with probationers running weekly drama workshops. Looking back, it could not happen today. I was either with a couple of other young women or sometimes on my own running drama exercises with arsonists and compulsive gamblers. One arsonist from St. Paul's Bristol told me he was a reincarnation of an Egyptian pharaoh. I loved all their stories and how, apart from anything else, they were very much adults, and they accepted a very middle-class naive young student.
After writing my personal timeline, I can see the thread of story that runs through it. These guys were interesting. They had stories. So, I think there was, at least in my early twenties, a bit of exoticism displayed in whom I chose to work with, along with a desire to help others.

1.3.3 Teacher - in charge of Drama One

From Exeter University I took my first post at Vincent Thompson. A moment of realisation occurred when I first started teaching at that school, dubbed a 'sink 'school. One young girl had made supreme improvements in her work. I wrote a glowing report for her as I wanted her to understand how well she had done. I felt chuffed about this report. "*So, what did your parents have to say about your report then?"* I asked, expecting a joyous and even grateful reply. The answer was: "*They never read it.*" This comment had a profound effect on me as a young, new teacher. In those few words I understood I was dealing with something so much greater than my efforts; a world that did not rate education. It seemed then that this particular sector of society, the working class, was not just being kept down by the system but, tragically, it was also repressing itself. It was also a blow to my ego. Who was I to think I could turn around the world through drama? However, it was at this school that I also saw the rich consequences of using drama, how young people there flourished. One girl would hobble in on her white high heels to every drama session and hobble off-site again as soon as it was over. For her, it was the only lesson that made any sense because it was real; because it explored what young people like her knew and understood. I learnt so much from those young people. They were very vocal and you knew exactly when something was working or not. No textbook can ever really prepare you for the actualities of working in a school setting. I inherited just under 50 students across two classes in drama, there were

just three pupils in music, not because they were keen young actors but because they thought it was a 'doss'. There is only one way up in a situation like that. In their final year, as I couldn't find a play with so many parts and with such a huge range of ability, I asked them what they would like a play about. I assumed, patronisingly, they would like a play set in a disco, but they surprised me by saying: "*Dartmoor*." So, I wrote a play for them, often with young people coming to see me, requesting more lines. I was able to tailor it to my group. The simple question: '*What do you want your play to be about?*' meant they had decided they had an investment in the piece. They were not just a bunch of kids doing something for a 'doss', but a group of young people who wanted to know about their local history, their heritage. That year, Vincent Thompson got the highest grades in drama in the whole of Exeter, bypassing the public schools and so-called high achieving schools. I took that lesson with me throughout my work – when possible – what do you want the play to be about? This was the question I asked the Penwithen Boys.

It's also important to note that most of the teachers I met there were highly dedicated; the very kind of teachers required at a school that has found itself at the bottom of the social ladder. They also had a school counsellor with whom, as a drama teacher, I could work. Both the titles - drama teacher and school counsellor - to the uninformed can be the butt of discussions about waste of resources but they are both vital, then and now. Interestingly in my current school, St. Aldhelm's Academy, they have both, as they recognise the worth of drama and counselling within a school that has so many social issues.

1.3.4 Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team

From Vincent Thompson, I moved to Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts (BCCA)[6] in 1989. It was there I worked as an actor /teacher as part of the Drama in Education (DIE) team. In time our title shifted from DIE to TIE (Theatre in Education). The TIE team was made up of two core members, Tony Horitz and myself; plus, amazingly, a yearly-seconded drama teacher and a full-time administrator, Sharon Watkins. Apart from the TIE team there were three other advisory teachers[7] who worked independently across the county and at the BCCA. The BCCA was an umbrella for a very rich arts offering that included youth arts and adult education.

[7] 1989 BCCA: Griff Harris, Principal, Simon Stone, Mike Wardley &Jeff Goodwin (who later became Principal) Advisory Teachers & Tony Horitz, Team Leader of DIE/TIE.

Originally, we were a free service to all Dorset Schools but as we moved further into the nineties, this changed and we began to start charging schools. Later as the counties were demarcated in 1997, we delivered predominantly to Bournemouth schools and our name changed to reflect this, Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team (BTIE). The team offered a variety of programmes in schools, mainly on issue-based work such as anti-racism, drugs education, road safety and bullying. We also ran sessions for teachers in order to complement the programmes before our visits, thus enriching the educational experience. As time moved on, schools became obliged to pay for BTIE visits. This, in turn, had an effect on our delivery. Some one-day projects became half-days and teachers were finding it hard to have time for extra training. The shift in the authorities did mean that, as we adjusted to the new way of working, we were able to take on freelance artists for some of our project-based work.

1.3.5 Site-specific work

Beginning under Dorset LEA and continuing into Bournemouth Borough Council, in the TIE team we were involved in creating site-specific community plays[8] in locations such as Kingston Lacy, in partnership with The National Trust and Wimborne Minister. These were influenced by the work of Ann Jellicoe, working on a very large canvas with schools in the heart of the project. [9]

1.3.6 Community Theatre Groups.

Tony and I were also instrumental in setting up two significant community theatre groups. Tony set up DATCO[10] with Gill Horitz[11] a theatre for those with learning disabilities. I set up Vita Nova for people in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. Both of these groups worked to a model. Firstly, as facilitators, we worked directly with the participants, creating a play, which was then offered to schools and the wider community. The effect was profound as a dialogue sprang out of these events that broke down stereotypes. Apart from my work with Vita Nova, increasingly I started to work with young people outside of mainstream education, 'hard to reach' young people with emotional and behavioural problems, and

[8] Community group :Out of this work has emerged Wimborne Community Group (WCT) www.wimbornecommunitytheatre.co.uk

[9] This model was developed further and in 1991 Wimborne Community Theatre was established to develop community theatre in unusual locations. www.wimbornecommunitytheatre.co.uk

[10] DATCO later TOPs (The Theatre Opportunities Project)

[11] Gill Horitz, Arts Development Officer at Bournemouth Borough Council, whose remit was to work in partnership with arts providers to develop creative projects with disabled people.

various Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The work was on-going and tough and I increasingly invited adults from Vita Nova to work with me as volunteer mentors with the young people. This as a structure worked extremely well; primarily for the young people but also for the mentors. My method was always the same; to try and create a play. Make something together. This focus drove us. Often the drama work challenged the labels that had been fixed on some of the young people. One girl with ADHD learnt and performed a huge chunk of Euripides' *Medea*. With a group of looked after children we created a play that we showed to the council; not the nice little theatre project they expected but a play about the constant shifting from one foster home to another. With a group of young women, *The Midnight Seekers*[12], all statemented with EBD we toured a piece they devised called *I don't know why I* to Winchester University and various schools. Their play was about restorative justice. It focused on the consequences of their anti-social behaviour and what triggered their actions. One of the group used the project as part of her community order.

Coexisting with this vital work was the constant worry of funding. Heart-breaking when you see something work but you cannot take it to the next stage, and profoundly with a group of Gypsy young people from a PRU. They called their play *Romany Rise*. Their desire to tell their story of loss resulted in a 100 % attendance for a group known for truanting. After a moving sharing of the play, we were unable to continue as there wasn't enough money. As it was, we had to plead for the participants who had turned 16, the cut off age for funding, for their taxi fares to be paid to bring them from the PRU to our centre. Small fry when you think of what was being achieved.

1.3.7 Child of the World – Surya Arts

I wrote *Child of the World*, a set of four playlets looking at the Rights of the Child and the issue of Fair Trade. This work is still on-going in the form of Surya Arts[13], an all-Asian team. Surya Arts was created after the disbandment of BTIE. Surya Arts continues delivering work that raises awareness of global economic issues; including two programmes, *Surya's Story* and *Jazz & Jagdeep Like Dancing,* to schools and the community.

[12] 'Midnight Seekers' 2006/7 a group of young women from Bicknell School (now Tregonwell Academy) worked with BTIE in partnership with the Youth Offending Team (YOT)
[13] Surya Arts www.suryaarts.co.uk

1.3.8 Refugee Project Give 'Us A Voice Project' 2001 -2002 [14]

A visual art and drama project.

In 2001, I was involved with a refugee group where we put a short play together to take to a local school to gain some understanding of what being a refugee meant. The following extract from my journal illustrates the importance of drama as an outlet for stories which are deeply important both to the individual and group. This project ties in with the theme I identified in my personal timeline; the need for story to make sense of situations. The group trusted me with their narratives. It was this particular project to which I later invited Nick, a Penwithen Boy who requested work experience with BTIE. (*See p 244*)

Hot Seating[15] Session with the refugee group. The stimulus for our drama and artwork was *The Scream* by Edvard Munch.

Journal extract 19.6.01

> *"Then we looked at Shirsha's character The Scream. I said what we're going to do is 'hot seat' him; there was a lot of humour about explaining what hot seating was. I looked up improvisation in the Arabic and Persian dictionary.*
> *Finally, we tried. Shirsha was shown the hot seat. He had to enter from the door. The first time everyone collapsed with laughter and someone asked: 'what are you?' We tried again. This time it went very well. People got the idea of asking questions. Interestingly, whether it was lack of communication or something else, Shirsha answered the group's questions very much as himself. I brought in the fact that we had seen his picture – seen him screaming. Shirsha answered that things were bad in his country. At the end of the hot seating everyone clapped.*
>
> *To my surprise Fahim was extremely keen to take the hot seat but again to answer questions not about his specific character but himself. Interestingly he and later Kouros who was also volunteering to be questioned went through the ritual of going to the door and entering. The key thing that stood out about Fahim was the incredible journey he made to this country walking for three days in extreme conditions where at one point he saw two young women fall into the water and get swept away.*
> *… …*
> *What was interesting was that here people were opting to tell their stories within a form of ritual entering, sitting down and being questioned. The group were anxious to hear their descriptions and often interjected and nodded with identification 'Oh yes that is how it is.'* "(Coyne 2002)

[14] 'Give Us A Voice 'Project co coordinator Beatriz Brooks

[15] Hot Seating**:** An exercise to deepen the understanding of a character. An individual takes on a role. The group/ audience is invited to ask the character **questions. The participant/ actor answers** in role.

1.3.9 Vita Nova

Vita Nova emerged as a community theatre group in 1999, in Boscombe, for those in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. That group still survives although for a time the organisation shifted from some of its early aims and objectives. Two years ago, in 2018, I was invited back as artistic director. The Penwithen Boys' Project would not have happened if it were not for the creation of Vita Nova. It is an example of how bridges of communication can be forged by the creation of a piece of drama by a group of people who do not just act out a story but are living proof of survival against adversity. Vita Nova's play, *Scratchin' the Surface,* developed out of the experience of Vita Nova members, was the springboard for dialogue. Their play was seen by over 60,000 people and their performance at Penwithen in 2001 ignited a possibility for the pupils there.

My MPhil research into the phenomenon of Vita Nova demonstrated that applied drama can support individuals' on-going recovery programme from drug and alcohol abuse. With Penwithen, I was able to test some of the drama techniques used in the context of Vita Nova with the Penwithen Boys. I discovered that, although the idea of making a play from scratch was exciting and motivating for both groups, there was a vast difference between the groups. I had to adapt my approach to the boys accordingly.

In 1999, I used an analogy for participants of Vita Nova, at the very beginning of our working together, as being in a kind of shadow-land. This sense of a shadow-land runs not just through Vita Nova and The Penwithen Boys but is universal to all the excluded groups with whom I have engaged. Some feel, as their self-belief is so low, that they deserve to live in this hinterland. Others actually believe the shadow-land in which they live is an alternative existence, a rebellion, and fingers up to society when it is so often a place of misery where aspiration and cultural expression are hard to thrive. A few members in Vita Nova told me at the inception of the project that they didn't want a job. Similarly, one young girl from a PRU strutted into the studio and announced: "*We don't do work*!" The emergence of Vita Nova from their shadow-land was a central theme of my MPhil thesis. I want to discover if the Penwithen Boys have truly emerged from theirs. Certainly, it was clear to observe in Latvia that their horizons were opening up as a new confidence took hold of them.

> Theatre has the capacity to bring people out of the shadow-lands. This is a metaphor I have used in conjunction with Vita Nova to capture how I perceive many people in recovery to be in a grey place, which they inhabit because they are afraid to be fully part of society. (Coyne 2007: 11)

It is with excitement and fear that I searched for the boys who are now men, not knowing if their pasts had been too much for them.
Generating a drama, a fiction, that leads to a piece of theatre with marginalised groups, in particular those in recovery, can help people to come to terms with their past and therefore move on with their lives. Theatre can give a *voice* to such groups. For some, it is the regaining of an old voice; for others, it is discovering a voice they never knew they had.

1.3.10 Freelance work & Associate Lecturer

The closure of BCCA heralded the end of 60 years of educational theatre provision in Bournemouth. BTIE was cut by Bournemouth Borough Council in 2009 as so many TIE teams were across the country. Tony and I reformed as State of Play Arts, which is still running, delivering drama and creative opportunities in schools and beyond. I found myself working again with Action on Addiction, using the same starting point; creating a play. Alongside this, I began as an associate lecturer with Winchester on the Applied Drama and Theatre in Education modules.

1.3.11 Action On Addiction

My weekly drama sessions' key objectives were engagement, working together and, very important in this particular setting, fun. Light relief from some of the very deep and necessarily introspective therapeutic work those clients in rehabilitation centres have to go through. Apart from this, a small tradition emerged at Action on Addiction where each Christmas I would put on a play. The clients would be put on a relaxed timetable for the week leading up to the show for them to prepare. For Christmas 2014, I wrote and put on *The Wind of Change*. A lovely piece of continuity for me, was that Kevin Tapscott, a professional counsellor at the treatment centre who co-ordinated this drama activity, was originally in Vita Nova. It is amazing to see someone who has turned his life around and is now such a benefit to the community. *The Wind of Change* was a triumph on all levels. Pirates finding life's gift on a desert island; not material treasure but the book *Narcotics Anonymous*.
The joy of creating that particular play and the delivery to a very warm community audience was magical; a proud moment for us all.

Notebook January 2015

Last week the lead actor of the group, his character's name 'no idea' that in the final line of the play changed to 'some idea', took an over-dose and at just 37 years is dead.
Heart breaking. Yet, even though I can hardly bear to think of the play now, I know the crew at the time of rehearsal and performances were very happy and totally engaged. They all pushed themselves to the limit.
It's not enough. But it's something. And applied drama at least did this. (Coyne 2015)

Billy 23.2.15
You will never see the sea again
So many words unsung
Never smile that smile again
You left everything half done
In limbo
Hanging by a lost cause thread
But, you'll never see the sea again
Or feel the rain or laugh again
You left us with broken plans
We could not hold you
We could not catch you
We could not find you
We could not save you from the torments of life
All stopped
All finished
Abruptly ended
The waves still lapping
The rain still crying
The wind still whispering
But never, your smile again
(Coyne 2015)

I hate the word 'client' because I am interested in the people with whom I work. As a result, my emotional protective armoury is not always effective. I wish it were. But maybe there has to be an acknowledgment that working within the applied field gives incredible rewards but it is almost part of the job that occasionally terrible things will happen and they will affect you. I can't actually see a way around that. When Billy overdosed and died, it was shocking. It was also a reminder that here was a person who thrived on the drama work we did, who made people laugh, who had great ideas for how we might perform various parts of our play, but it wasn't enough to hold him. His last words to me after inviting him to do some drama work in school were: "*It is my destiny*," and with that he smiled and I never saw him again.

This incident fuses with my theme at the beginning of the thesis. It's political what choices some people have in their lives. Some tabloids might say: "*Well he was a dirty addict. What do you expect?*" but we knew Billy as a human being.
This story was a warning about what might be revealed about the Penwithen Boys. Were they all still alive?
Before concluding this short journey of my career, I want to include three recent projects because I am still learning and still in the on-going process of developing my practice.

1.3.12 The Poole Passion 2008-2018

I saw an exhibition in London called *The Passions* by artist Bill Viola who had used film images and actors 'moving' slowly in tableaux. I thought, as I had walked around the exhibition, that this is 'actor's art' and that I would like to make a series of tableaux that would move in slow motion for the Stations of the Cross. The impact of Viola's *The Passions* was profound as it was not long after my father had died. The idea was enthusiastically taken up by Father Nigel Lloyd and Rev Jonathan Martin[16], who said that Poole Council's tourist department had wanted a passion play for some time and was just waiting for someone who could do it. Suddenly from tableaux, I was writing a full-length play! The Poole Passion (TPP) became a tradition paradoxically from the conception of the project. After our first production in 2009, I spoke to someone who had wandered into St. Peter's for the final scenes, from the pub opposite. She and her friends had seen the procession. They had come into church on both nights. She told me: '*We always come to the last part,*' as if it had been happening for years.

The play took place between two churches with a procession in-between. After Jesus has been condemned to death, the audience would leave Parkstone United Reformed and proceed up the hill to St. Peter's. At this point, the audience shift from being spectators to actors. Cars hoot as they pass by. People stop what they are doing. People drinking at the two pubs close to the churchyard stop, watch, and in some cases join the procession into the graveyard and church scenes. Outside fires and son et lumière on St. Peter's wall, then as the audience enters inside the building, they are met with plainchant, incense and the crucifixion.

[16] Father Nigel Lloyd then Rector of St.Peter's Church, Parkstone & Rev Jonathan Martin then minister of Parkstone United Reformed Church (PURC)&Chaplin to Poole Council .Rev Roger Bayldon became the producer of TPP.

I never auditioned for roles, using instead improvisation and tableaux to explore the script and bring the group together. A frequent comment in our first production was: "*When are we going to get on to the actual play*?" It is vital to get to know the people involved. It's not a case of: "*Here's a script and now we'll keep running through it.*" It was a learning curve for a lot of people who were not used to working in such an organic or, to rephrase, seemingly chaotic way. Chaos is the foundation to creativity and exploration. The actual group impacts on the writer either consciously or subconsciously. For a while what arose was a fairly traditional retelling of the final part of Jesus' life. However, the play lacked a dynamic. Then it came to me during one rehearsal that what was needed was another perspective. I decided to frame the play through the eyes of a child. Children ask difficult questions. In a way it was to help myself as much as the audience to look at the life of Jesus from another viewpoint.

The 2009 production although not perfect, had the thrill of being new. Somehow, we created something special, beyond our hopes. The play talked to people on all levels. The energy from such a diverse group and the sheer effort of making it work came across very powerfully to the audience. It was clear that *Through the Eyes of a Child* was not going to be a one-off. This is a similar situation to what occurred with Vita Nova, in both cases a grassroots movement leading to the continuance of these projects.

What is interesting about the *Poole Passion* is how it created a community. Similar to so much of applied work the word 'family' was used by the participants to describe their experience. This has been a recurring motif through many projects I have worked on, especially in respect of Vita Nova. One of the actors in the 2012 Passion, whom I knew to be in early recovery from drug abuse, a fact unknown to most of the group, showed great kindness to some of the older members of the group. He would help them to sit down and make them a cup of tea. His act was so appreciated by those older actors, some who live alone. They were unaware of the unbelievably difficult journey which that particular individual was making in his life. In turn, I witnessed that person gain a real sense of self-worth as the play matured.

Work on the play didn't just occur within the weekly community drama group but there were also satellite workshops in various venues such as a local school, Routes to Roots[17] and

[17] R2R http://www.routestoroots.org charity, which seeks to serve the needs of homeless people of all faiths and none.

Action on Addiction. Although the content of the play follows the story of Jesus it was an event open to anyone who wanted to participate; totally inclusive… faith, inter-faith, non-faith, intergenerational, open to professional and non-professional artists and performers. An eclectic group with many people communicating with folk they would never have crossed paths with had it not been for the play. The last supper scene was always a metaphor of this philosophy of inclusivity. The twelve with Jesus sat around a table made in the woodwork workshop at Action on Addiction.

> …a beautiful last supper. Canon; a lay member of The Third Order of St. Francis; dual heritage; ex-homeless; those in recovery; believers and not sure; age range fifteen years to eighty plus; and, oh yes, a woman Jesus; all at the same table. There was an authenticity about such a diverse mix of people united in a creative endeavour: something transcendent, wonderful, a weight, a presence that echoed the stories that each face brought to the table. No one had written a list of who was required to be one of the twelve: it had just emerged through the drama process.
> (Coyne 2013:25)

Besides a woman Jesus we had a black Jesus, an Irish Jesus, a mixed-race Jesus, and two of the actors were in recovery. We used the same script, but the interpretation was always different. Professional filmmakers and photographers Jordi Roberts and Martin Coyne, who had come my way via Vita Nova, worked on all the *Passion Plays*. As my work has evolved, I have reused artists who are not only great professionals, but empathetic and able to work with vulnerable groups. Both Jordi and Martin accompanied me with the Penwithen Project. Applied theatre can be a vehicle for bringing people together when many aspects of community life have been broken down.

> I have over the years been trying to make sense of why the TPP project has continued and why people want to see the same play again. My hunch is that we deal with topics that are not spoken about so much; these are death, spirituality and that 'state of losing control'. I use the word spirituality in its broadest sense, not in merely affiliating it only to a Christian standpoint. *(Ibid,* 25)

One audience member wrote after seeing the 2012 production: "*I'm not a religious person, but I feel like I've just had a spiritual experience."*

During the build-up to the first production (2009), my mother became ill and died not long before our first performance. I include this fact as the play came to be, for me as writer, a way of dealing with her death. Audiences watching the play have made connections with their own personal loss or grief and it appears in some ways to have helped them. Grief is

universal. The story of The Passion explores bereavement. It is a story of death and resurrection. After watching both my parents die, I was struck at how something tangible left them. It is only through the language of art and literature that we can attempt to make sense of or cope with such a momentous event. I thought as I sat with my father of the words, 'He gave up the ghost'. I had never considered the physicality of that phrase until that moment. My father had gone, left, although I sat with his body, holding his hand. To an extent the creation of the first play was a cathartic experience for me, very tied up with loss and death. Firstly, my father's death as the initial starting point. Later, writing the play, *Through the Eyes of the Child*, became an immediate response to my mother's undulating illness and ultimate death. There was the best part of a month when I could not run rehearsals. What was wonderful was how other members of the group kept the play going. I was back home, heartbroken. It was then I was able to use my experiences with mum to write the final part of the play. In the original production, the Child's Angel was played by an elderly member of the cast, Myra. The Angel accompanies the modern Boy throughout the play. When at the end the angel leaves:

Stage direction: Boy runs off but stops and looks back at his Guardian Angel

Boy: Aren't you coming with me?
Child's Angel: Of course. Just because you won't see me anymore doesn't mean I'm not there.

Stage direction: They look at each other and smile

Boy: I know that now.
Stage direction: He kisses her. The boy runs off. The Child's Angel joins all the other angels and Jesus. They all walk up through the Altar gates. The Angel closes the gates and the lights fade down to black out.

The End.

The Wheel begins to come full circle……

1.3.13 Teacher in charge of Drama: Two 2016- 2020

By chance, I was in St. Aldhelm's Academy with a workshop for *The Poole Passion*. Their drama teacher had just resigned. My situation after the demise of BTIE and the sensation of hourly paid work at university led me to take up the post for what I thought would be a term. I ended up staying on a part-time basis so that I could continue my freelance work. I am

ashamed to say that part of me felt this was a backward step. But working in a school just coming out of special measures has been humbling. I was able to build up a department that had hit a bit of a rock bottom. With my experience at Vincent Thompson all those years ago, I was reminded of the quality and resilience of teachers who work in challenging situations, often having to pick up the pieces for societal failure. There is a flexibility in St. Aldhelm's that allowed me to be able to link some of my outside work with the school… bringing in Surya Arts, Vita Nova, The Poole Passion and being able to use our school as the foundation for the Travellers' project. There is an ethos at St. Aldhelm's, very much championed by the head teacher, Jon Webb, and head of performing arts, Clare King, who both understand the value of the arts in impacting on children's wellbeing, self-confidence, stamina and cultural capital.

1.3.14 Vita Nova as Artistic Director: Two 2018

After deciding it was time for others to take on The Poole Passion after ten years' input, I was thinking how good it was not to carry so much responsibility. Then, Vita Nova approached me with: "*We need your help.*" Vita Nova, after nearly twenty years of existence, was struggling. They wanted me to return as artistic director. It would mean a restructuring of the organisation and a return to its roots in educational work…with no immediate salary.
After a lot of self-questioning, I decided to return as there was too much to lose. I had to continue teaching part-time and doing freelance work in order to maintain a living.

Two years on we are growing once more. Touring *The Nest*[18] to schools and treatment centres, I have gained a modest salary. There is still a lot to do but we are moving in the right direction. In a time of recession and pandemic, Vita Nova is desperately needed. The climate is very different from that of 1999. No BCCA and treatment centres being cut. However, I come with more experience and feel that this is an opportunity to try things differently. In particular, protecting myself from exhaustion, as I failed to do the first time around.

1.3.15 Pilsdon Community and the Travellers' project - two significant freelance community projects 2018

The inclusion of these projects is to demonstrate again how powerful applied drama is as a way of telling people's stories. Although both commissions required using research material and were, in part, reflective pieces they also differed radically in how they were conceived

[18] The Nest a one-act play by Sharon Coyne that deals with the point someone decides to stop using drugs and alcohol.

and this had an impact on the work. They also contrast in that Pilsdon is a residential centre whereas there was no central meeting point for the Travellers. With both undertakings, I feel there was maturity in my work in meeting the challenges that they produced. The experience of both clarifies the use of applied drama as a flexible tool, able to fit particular projects.

The Pilsdon Community 2018

The work with this community resulted in a play written, devised and performed in the open air for the Pilsdon Community's 60th anniversary, called *The Unknown, Remembered Gate.*[19] Before this commission, I had never heard of Pilsdon, a place that welcomes wayfarers and anyone who is seeking another way of living. After having the privilege of working there, I shall always have it somewhere in my heart. The play that was created clearly identified the ability of applied drama to encompass a group of people and celebrate their lives. It revealed again the need to be truthful, that the work has to be meaningful, purposeful… and that hospitality and spirituality have a place in applied drama.

I stayed overnight at the community on a couple of occasions and ate with the residents. This was important with this group, some of whom were very vulnerable and had experienced a great trauma in their lives. Knowing when to encourage and when to push a little, becomes intuitive. Some people didn't want to speak. So, adapting to this situation, accepting and seeing this as a positive and an opportunity is essential. Applied drama basically makes work that is tailor-made for the individual group.

The Pilsdon community is all about acceptance. Applied Drama is all about acceptance.
I was given rich source materials gathered by Mary Davies[20] and her team, who collected a set of deeply moving interviews from those who had been part of the Pilsdon story. I was able to use some of those words along with present day writings, poems, fragments of dialogue and monologues. For this project, the use of the working-script was pivotal. It gave solidity to our work. I drafted and redrafted time and time again as people became more involved in the making. I wrote the opening scene to echo the history of Pilsdon. A dialogue between ghosts. 20th century Percy Smith founder of Pilsdon converses with 17th century Nicholas Ferrar. It was Ferrar's community at Little Gidding that was the inspiration for Smith's venture at Pilsdon.

[19] The unknown, remembered gate' 'The unknown, remembered gate' (T. S. Eliot); a play created by the Pilsdon Community &Sharon Coyne
[20] Mary Davies Community Member

From that moment, people 'got it', realising my writing the first part of the script was an invitation to add their own ideas, writings and props. It was a collage, everything and everyone was welcome.

It was necessary to avoid producing a history lesson. My role was to find a symbolic language to interpret individual stories and the holistic story of Pilsdon… their work tethered to the constant rhythm of the seasons, the laughter and pain. Hence, the creation of the character of Pierrot in our play. He represented the people who are quiet, silently living their lives. The use of choral work and movement was a strong motif throughout the play, as it gave the group confidence.

The group's support of each other allowed them courage to tell their stories, warts and all, to an audience of nearly 200. The play became quite sophisticated, with church bells ringing and a record player brought outside to play *John Barleycorn*. We had over twenty actors, including two of the children who live in the community. A community choir, with strong connections to Pilsdon, joined us to sing the hymn *Jesus Christ the Apple Tree*. Like the Poole Passion, the play included a last supper, with a table made out of hay bales.
The piece was still evolving during the actual performance. The addition of a monologue eloquently written by a wayfarer, who arrived just the day before the performance, was enthusiastically embraced. The process of creating and contributing to *The Unknown, Remembered Gate* was as significant as the performance. The drama group became caught up with making something that was meaningful and significant to them. In between my visits, they increasingly began to rehearse themselves, taking ownership of the work.

Participant: "*A month ago I was half dead, so far I have really enjoyed the project I am impressed with the creativity it's a good experience*."
Participant: "*It works. It brought us all closer. I have been in fits of giggles, great to be part of it."*

Ghost Gypsy - Traveller Project 2018

This was a challenging project, with a brief to empower young Gypsies and Traveller women and encourage them to vote. Time was limited and making contact was a difficult task.
Some people don't want to be identified as Traveller or Gypsy given all the prejudice that this particular ethnic group has endured over thousands of years. However, bit-by-bit we

began to build trust and the word 'film' seemed to switch people on. The result was a short community film *Ghost Gypsy*.[21]

The nucleus of the project was a drama group consisting of five young Traveller girls at St. Aldhelm's Academy, where I was teaching. When I first asked them if they would like to be involved, they were suspicious: "*I don't know about it. I don't like people knowing I'm a Traveller.*" However, as soon as we started meeting together, there was a sense of relief; the girls understood each other and were able to relax. They were happy to talk about how displaced they felt. In our first meeting, one of them said: "*People say you're not a real Gypsy if you don't live in a trailer*." This statement struck me because of the dilemma young Travellers face knowing that they are Gypsies, but not being able to live in the way they would like. They are betwixt and between two worlds. This emerged as a key theme. The group didn't know much about their roots, so the project became a living history lesson. As one girl later commented: "*I learnt a lot about my culture and how we used to be*." They grew into a committed group staying behind after school and filming over the weekends. This is significant, given that some of the girls struggled with school attendance.

At one site that we visited, a Traveller recounted how a previous arts project had come to film them and they never heard from them again; hence their suspicion. In my opinion, that kind of behaviour is the theft of people's stories. We were determined that in our project everyone would be named and have a copy of the film and photographs.

A devised piece was not appropriate due to time and travel limitations. So, for this project, I wrote the film's script. Nevertheless, I tried to distil and honour people's stories with the focus on young Traveller women. Ray Wills, Gypsy poet, provided local historical information. A series of script reading consultation sessions were set up. Language was vital. For instance, the young people at St. Aldhelm's were happy to correct the word for 'police'; it is '*gavers'*. Betty Smith-Billington, Chair of Kushti Bok, enjoyed naming characters (e.g. 'Violet' and 'Caleb') and helpfully pointed out a couple of my mistakes. (I had thought that Gypsies were not on the 1911 census but they were.) I was able to amend the script and the

[21] *Ghost Gypsy* A creative initiative from The Arts Development Company, funded by 'The Women's Vote Centenary Grant Scheme', in partnership with DREC (Dorset Race Equality Council), DEED (Development Education in East Dorset) and the Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) community group Kushti Bok. Working closely with Jane Jones (DREC) & Louise Boston-Mammah (DEED)

group felt valued. I selected the frame of time-travelling. When young Violet travels back in time and meets with the ghost of her granny, she learns about her history.
A challenge emerged when someone could not make it to the filming. My suggestion was to bring in an actor to take the role. Members of Kushti Bok were adamant that we had to work only with Gypsies and Travellers. I was sympathetic to their concern, but we also had to make the film. Michael Johnson, well known in the community, heroically stepped in. Of course, he didn't know the lines, so the filming was slow and the piece hard to edit. But it was the right course of action. A 'film community' grew and people stepped up. Kushti Bok also learnt about the difficulties of making a film, whilst recognising they were being listened to and this helped to create a strong working bond. These challenges brought us together
For the non–Traveller's roles, I involved two participants from Pilsdon and members from Vita Nova. These connections between projects are useful, providing engagement and opportunity for people to make new connections and form fruitful relationships. Given my personal challenge of acceptance, I was pleased by the evaluation by Betty, Chair of Kushti Bok:

> " I loved every minute and I'm proud to have been a part of something that may go some way to combat bullying and discrimination of Britain's largest ethnic minority group: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma." (Coyne 2018)

Finally, after the project was over, I was running a workshop in school and someone asked me about the Holocaust: "*How come people were so mean to the Jews*?" One of the girls from the project interjected: "*It wasn't just Jewish people; Gypsies were also persecuted*." This knowledge was a direct result of taking part in the film - and she now had the confidence to say it out loud.

Last Suppers

The Poole Passion. Table created by Action on Addiction. 2014 Photograph: © Jarrod Thompson
Pilsdon 'Pierrot breaks bread' 2018.Photgarphn: © Martin Coyne

Reflection

Here ends a whistle stop tour of both my professional and personal journey.
I believe that applied drama can play a part in adjusting societal balance. To what extent and how this is measured is subjective. What does success look like when working at the extreme end of societal neglect?

What revealed itself during the exercise of noting both my personal and professional paths is that, over the years, real dialogues have occurred internally and publicly that have been transformative. I believe that, at its best, magic can be created by channelling negativity into a positive and creative endeavour, by making a play. The process of building a play involves playing. This is an area not to be underestimated, for some people play has been out of reach and replaced with something damaging.

Have I changed as a facilitator over the years? For people working in the arts or vocationally, the separation of personal and professional is never clear cut. One life feeds into the other and *vice versa*. Of course, distance and boundaries are vital. But it's impossible not to get involved with those you work with, especially if you are witness to their inner stories.
The biggest discovery for me at the end of this chapter is that repressed stories can come out, surface in drama. Ironically, the secret, the untold truth metamorphoses into a highly public telling. Crucially, the fiction protects the teller. As an undergraduate, I created *Hamadryad*. A play about loss of innocence and betrayal. The tree spirit falls in love with the Woodman. The Woodman is ordered to cut the tree down. He does. I didn't understand the significance of the symbolism I was using until after the play. Two male fellow students in the audience cried, telling me they had been 'Woodmen' in their relationships.

Vita Nova, in their play *Scratchin' the Surface,* used the language of theatre to tell their inner stories. The symbolism of addiction, the 'Raven', was given by myself. I was able as facilitator to offer an outside lens to interpret their stories. The difference between my twenty-one-year-old self, trying to express herself on an instinctive level, and my later self is that, as a mature facilitator, I was knowingly using metaphor and symbolism to attempt to make sense of the inexplicable.

I am not a drama therapist …but a practitioner who has found that the disciplines and structures of applied drama and theatre can be therapeutic for those who have participated in it. John Somers clearly explains the notion of Applied Drama:

> Applied Drama is a dramatic activity, which aims to 'do a job'. Unlike the serendipity associated with normal theatre going, Applied Drama is often practised in researched contexts with targeted groups, which possess some degree of homogeneity. The activity aims at achieving, sometimes preordained, positive change, within the target group.
> Applied Drama requires its practitioners to adopt a 'rights-based' approach, which takes full account of the rights (and responsibilities) of all parties. In doing this, practitioners need to be sensitive to the cultural, political, social, and personal contexts in which the activity will take place. Applied Drama practitioners are required to possess a wide range of knowledge and skills in the areas of drama, sociology, education, psychology, ethics, cultural studies, and politics.
> Applied Drama practice can range across a wide spectrum of dramatic activity. (Somers, personal communication, 19.7.06)

Finding the boys, and a method to measure the lasting impact from the Penwithen project has led me to a greater understanding of my work. It also reveals possible implications for the validation of applied drama work.

Chapter Two: The Map Methodology

2.1 Research approach autoethnography

This inquiry into the effects of the Penwithen Boys project could indicate the potential for positive long-term outcomes within other applied drama projects.
How can we truly measure the ephemeral nature of drama? What claims can I make that go beyond the anecdotal, beyond the romanticism that drama can change lives? When we dial 999 we rarely get an ambulance full of dramatists, yet we sometimes hear ourselves saying that: "D*rama can save lives*."

My input into the project, like so many other drama practitioners, facilitators, teachers and 'fools' is reliant to a great extent on the individual; their persona when working with a group. The outcome of any applied project is co-dependent on the relationship between facilitator and participant. Questions arise that are not just to do with the practitioner's methods, but why they have chosen to undertake the work in the first place?
My supervisor gave a name to the methodological design I was searching for, 'autoethnography'. This approach could accommodate the multiple layers of the project, from the individual participants to the social political landscape, and my role within the work:

> Consequently, autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist.
> (Ellis et al 2011:3)

Deciding on autoethnography poses another question. To what extent does the personal story of an applied facilitator impact on his/her work?
An autoethnographic approach represents my situation as researcher, facilitator, at times participant and my identity as a human being who acknowledges that applied drama is essentially political. My orientation to this research being autoethnographic acknowledges my 'indwelling' position in this study; my role as part of the primary data to be analysed. This is a shift from seeing myself only in the role of an 'indwelling' researcher, a position in which, as a practitioner, I have often found myself; a situation where I am an integral part of

the research debate. Holliday when talking about the position of 'indwelling' almost apologetically says:

> …researchers cannot help being socially located persons (Cameron et al.1992: 5). They are part and parcel of all the influences and interests of society. They must struggle as people to interact with people. Thus, the written study also becomes an account of personal struggle to make sense of complex human situations within which the researcher herself often becomes implicated. (Holliday 2002: 10)

Applied drama work often lacks financial resources and time to allow for the luxury of an external researcher. Objectivity and potential bias may become an issue. It is almost impossible to self-analyse the social constructs that form ourselves as facilitators. Impartiality when engaging in socio-politically motivated work is almost an oxymoron. With this current study, unlike my previous research, I recognise that merely declaring one's positioning as 'indwelling' does not tell the whole story. This is because autoethnographic methodology, although similarly accepting one's critical positioning in the investigation, notably differs by acknowledging that the researcher's story, their narrative, has significance and importance:

> Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, auto-ethnography is both process and product. (Ellis et all, 2011:1)

Autoethnography offers a methodology in which I may address the questions posed in this dissertation with creativity. This gives a certain freedom. I have found it almost impossible to separate myself from my work and the political influences around me. This is because virtually all of my work, the Penwithen Boys, in particular, has resulted from specific social and political contexts. Alongside the freedoms that autoethnography offers, is the challenging requirement of introspective exploration. This may create a sense of vulnerability, honesty or a coming out that goes beyond the usual sharing of a facilitator. I certainly felt this to be the case when undertaking my timeline, as seen in the previous chapter.

2.2 Research methods

The timeline within an autoethnographical approach provides a method for self-analysis producing insightful data. The process of constructing two timelines, professional and personal, offered new perspectives on my life's journey. I was able to contextualise my applied drama activity in 2001, within a holistic mapping of my work whilst recognising how it integrated into my personal life. Making different decisions at different times in a person's life reinforces the situatedness of data (Sandelowski, 2011, *op. cit.*). The timeline exercise became explicit in illustrating the alignment of my working experiences with social, political and historical events. Autoethnography as with ethno-drama accepts, almost celebrates, tangential and complex human relations that constantly arise in the work of applied drama. This research is important to me as a facilitator and as a human being who is interested in social justice.

Fitting within this approach is the increasing acknowledgment of ethno-drama as a viable and useful frame to investigate applied practice. Ethno-drama offers many valuable aspects for conducting research, in particular the notion that:

> …one of the characteristics of drama is that participants, actors and audience, put themselves into other's shoes, empathising with the subjects of the drama while simultaneously maintaining distance and detachment through the celebrated 'dual affect'. (Ackroyd et al, 2010:4)

This 'dual affect' of empathy and distance is important, as the subjects in the Penwithen piece were also part of the performance. The boys were able to empathise, as it was their story.

A 'positivist approach' will not form the main thrust of this research as this study sits within an interpretivist philosophy. The epistemology of this study falls into 'relativism' not 'realism'. Therefore, an overarching qualitative approach is adopted above a quantitative one. Quantitative research is defined by Bryman & Bell (2005, p. 154) as a method of:

> …entailing the collection of numerical data and exhibiting the view of relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for natural science approach, and as having an objectivist conception of social reality.
> (Dudovskiy, 2017: 1)

Dudovskiy's definition confirms that a quantitative approach would not be wholly appropriate as the Penwithen Project is deeply subjective. The data gathered is predominately through interviews that will be based on recalling events that happened over nineteen years ago. The material documentation dates from the same time and this may prove difficult to measure accurately. A qualitative approach will be more useful as it is less binary than a quantitative strategy. Bell also states that: "*A qualitative perspective is more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world.*" (Bell 1993: 1). Due to the interpretive approach of this study, qualitative analysis will form the basis for this research. Hillary A. Radnor speaks succinctly about her role as an interpretive researcher. It is a position I wish to emulate:

> As an interpretive researcher, I believe that I am capable of interpreting and articulating my experiences about the world to others and myself. I do not stand apart from society as an observer but actively construct the world in which I live. I can only know social reality through my subjective understanding. Social reality cannot be separated from the meaning I give to it, how I make sense of it. (Radnor, 1994:8)

Even though my study will be using qualitative analysis, I will draw on quantitative analysis at times as a useful structure to make sense of some of the data collected.
Adams *et al* (2015:1) state that: "*Autoethnography is a research method*." Their identified key elements of this method formed useful reference points for this study. *(See Appendix 1.)*

2.3 Data collection:

2.3.1 Primary Data

The core of my data collection is the material gained from interviews.
In addition to the interviews, my timeline is an undercurrent to this research. (*See Chapter One*)
Data collection follows a Grounded Theory approach. As Stauss (1987) says: '*Very diverse materials,'* can be '*indispensable data for social research.'* (Denscombe 2003:114).
My primary data consists of: working journals 2002, reports *Son of Vita Nova* and *Penwithen Boys Trip* to Latvia to perform '*Til It All Went Wrong* at The Baltic Festival of Love Riga, Latvia, 9-12th June 2002 article printed in *National Drama* 2003, verbatim data-collected, fragments of conversations - words related to me in informal settings, photographic and video evidence used to record and document rehearsals and performances; importantly a video documentary of the project made in 2002. Original footage of rehearsals and process

that were not used in the documentary were on old tapes and had to be converted into digital readable format.

The actual devised script of '*Til It All Went Wrong (2002)* is a form of data. The script is the product of the collected experiences and work of the group. The importance of the devised script is heralded in *Performance Research* as being a potent source of data:

"T*he dialogue was part of the performance, in a broad sense, and therefore part of the research."* (Ackroyd et *al*, 2010: 16).

2.4.1 Open-ended narrative interviews

The choice of design for conducting the interviews was vital. The wrong approach may have led to the loss of essential material. I grappled with several options. I could not imagine working with highly structured interviews. There was also the question of using prompts such as pictures or film from 2001/2 to jog their memories. Or first, should I just see what they want to tell me? I became attracted to Mishler's views on qualitative interviews, his emphasis on story:

> How people express their understandings of events and experiences,
> …when engaged in conversation with one another we automatically tell stories, and thus the qualitative interview is a site of endless possibilities. Mishler 1986' (King et al 2010: 213)

I eventually opted to use semi-structured interviews. This strategy was close to what I hoped to achieve, to discover through their stories whether drama can transform. Crucial to this was the notion of narrative research. The issue of memory when working with past events will have an impact on what is a longitudinal study; in particular the idea of myth making. King and Horrocks refer to Murray who describes Narrative Knowing as: "*A fundamental means through which people come to understand themselves, organizing interpretations of the world in storied form*." *(*Murray 2003 in King et *al* 2010: 212)

The vast problems around the authenticity of given accounts in interviews cannot be ignored. However, the concept of story-making is key to theatre and drama work as a way of making sense of life. The form the interviewer offers will undoubtedly impact on the interviewee's recounting of events. King & Horrocks further suggest considering the notion of '*life as lived and life as told'.* They expand on this theory stating that:

> Narrative accounts might simply represent actual experience, recreating and reproducing events and experiences as they occurred; thus, they portray life as lived. Alternatively, when we take a more 'constructivist' position we become aware of how retelling or reflection on

events brings about change." Constructivism, as Burr (2003:19) makes clear, sees the person: "As actively engaged in the creation of the phenomenal world. (King et al, 2010: 214)

This approach had resonance as it gives importance to the 'retelling'. One of the core reasons for researching this project is linked to a compulsion I have had to retell the experience after all those years. I wondered if others have retold the story.
I began formulating a series of semi-structured interview questions with a focus on this philosophical understanding of the interview. 'Life as lived; life as told'. After committing to this approach, I then rejected the semi-structured interview, but not the philosophy. I made this decision after I discovered Tom Wengraf's interviewing or, almost non-interviewing approach, 'The Biographic–Narrative Interpretive Method' (BNIM) (Wengraf 2004). As soon as I read about BNIM, where there is very little intervention from the interviewer, and acknowledging an element of precariousness, especially after such a long gap, I felt the possibilities for tapping into authentic memory are more likely with such a strategy. The possibility of capturing truth is a risk worth taking. Horrocks describes the BNIM technique as: "*Open-ended narrative interviews rather than a more conventional semi – structured approach,"* (King *et al*, 2010:223) stating that: "*the interviewer relinquishes control, aiming to allow the narrative to fully flow from the interviewee.*" (*Ibid: 223*). Importantly the interviewer's support is 'non directional'**.**

Wengraf's distinctive viewpoint opened a door for me. This was how I wanted to set out my interviews, although I could envisage possible pitfalls. From what I remembered of the 'lads', some were over confidant, even what could be described as 'cocky'. I doubt those boys will have a problem. One boy who would never put down his hoodie reminded me of 'Sanity' from the film *East is East,* as he always had his face hidden under a large Parker jacket hood. Would he be able to manage with just one question?

After the initial excitement, I further investigated Wengraf's method of interviewing but I realised it was very complex. I contacted Tom Wengraf himself. He generously read through my first two transcripts concluding that the interviews cannot be defined as BNIM. However, they can be classed as a variation of, or as 'influenced by' Wengraf. I also have to accept that without formal training, I can only arrive at a modified and reappropriated version of BNIM that suits my situation and the limitations I am working within. I did maintain some of the ethos of Wengraf's approach:

> Assuming that "narrative expression" is an expression both of conscious concerns and also unconscious cultural, societal and individual presuppositions and processes, it is concerned with both the 'inner' and the 'outer' worlds of historical person-in-historical situation'; it is both psychodynamic and sociobiographic in approach. The primary focus on the particularity of individual experience in unique historical and societal locations and processes… … lays the basis for systematic later 'whole case' comparison and grounded theorisation." (Wengraf, 2004: 2)

2.4.2 My framework for the interviews

I followed an interpretation structure of Wengraf's BNIM: "two main sessions in the main interview' (Wengraf 2004: 4): "*With the 'initial narrative succession starts with a single question designed to elicit the life story of the informant as he or she chooses to tell it. This single question can be abbreviated as a SQUIN."* (*Ibid : 4*)

My 'SQUIN' question to all the interviewees:

> *"I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story"*

I followed this question with words based on BNIM patter:

> Sharon: "*I would like you please, to tell me, your Penwithen story. All the events and experiences which are important to you, and you can start whenever you like. It doesn't matter about the sequence, and I'm just going to listen, and take some notes."*

With each interview I took notes so that after a break I could move onto a version of Wengraf's 'second sub-session' which is 'the opportunity to ask questions that come out of the initial interview but with 'a lot of restrictions'. Firstly, Wengraf says you must only ask "*Narrative–pointed questions about some of the topics raised.*" (*ibid., 4).* As long as their words are used and the chronological order of their telling is maintained. Interestingly Wengraf makes it clear that as an interviewer: "*You never put two topics together.*" (*ibid.,4*).

Wengraf's system also offers an optional third sub-session where the interviewer may: "*Ask further questions or other sorts of questions, non–narrative ones, that arise from what was said in the first interview.*" (Wengraf 2004: 5) He suggests that the form of interviewing may change here; that the rules of 'semi–structured depth interviewing' can be used.

In all the five interviews I conducted I did return to each interviewee with pick-up questions that needed clarification.

This then was the structure I consistently used. Myself conducting all the interviews and Jordi Robert filming them. That I knew all the participants either as a teacher, mentor or colleague does have to be taken into consideration. It will have had an impact on the interview. However, in all the interviews I held, I felt strongly that my presence put people at ease.

2.4.3 Primary Interviews

I made a decision to find and interview three out of the seven boys. The selection process became an organic one. Besides, Darren Attard, the non-Penwithen Boy, although only having limited contact since the project I knew he remained local. The whereabouts of the others was a complete mystery. Fate led me to Dan Stanaway and Nick Burton was located via Darren. It turned out that these three boys provided interesting perspectives, a hostel boy, a day boy and one an excluded young man placed with the TIE team who fully took part in the drama project. The rest I endeavoured to locate and offer snap shots of where life has taken them and the impact of the project. I managed to find David Bishop near the end of my research and include him using micro semi-structured interviews (2.4.5)
Darren, Dan, Nick and David all gave permission for me to use their actual names. The three unfound boys I will refer to by use of pseudonyms Nathan, Kieran and Bradley. I have tried hard to locate Bradley, as he is the one boy who did not make it to Latvia. Sadly, this was not possible.
Throughout the thesis when referring to the Penwithen Boys, I include Darren in that.

2.4.4 Secondary Interviews

Although my choice of interview method was work intensive and time-consuming, I decided to continue with the same structure for the two secondary interviews: Jan Morgan their teaching assistant at Penwithen and Inguna Gremza , director of The Baltic Bell. I would have loved to interview Eileen Tucker, their teacher, but sadly she passed away in 2016.

2.4.5 Micro semi-structured interviews

As my research progressed other people emerged who were part of the story. It felt important to include their perspectives. I set up a series of micro semi-structured interviews to capture snapshots of their recollections of the project. I asked just two questions:

What is your strongest memory from the Penwithen Project 2001/2?

Has anything changed you?

With all the micro semi-structured interviews participants were not given the questions beforehand so that their responses were spontaneous.
I questioned Larry Symister and Graham Lambert, volunteer mentors from Vita Nova, Jordi Robert, filmmaker, and Martin Coyne, photographer, both artists in recovery. All four interviewees I had kept in contact with over the years, some to a greater degree than others … Martin I had married.
Finally, I interviewed Inga Baibakova, now a film producer in London. In 2002 when 17, she had been a guide for the boys in Latvia. I had not had any contact with her since that time. All those who took part in the micro semi-structured interviews agreed for their actual names to be used.

2.5 Analysis of Research Findings

BNIM methodology for the interpretation of interviews is particularly complex. I was unsure how to proceed with the vast amount of material I had accumulated from the interviews. What I did realise was that my adapted version of Wengraf's method revealed rich material. Certainly, I was impressed by the amount of information all of the interviewees could recall and how strongly they all felt about what had happened. Had I offered semi-structured questions, I would not have heard their inner feelings or significant episodes that I had not even contemplated. Consequently, I can demonstrate important results, an indication of the lasting effects that applied drama intervention can achieve; but how to present and make sense of the interview data? I had transcribed and written field notes for all the stages of each of the five interviews. I found myself stuck. I discussed my dilemma via email correspondence with Dr Kip Jones, a renowned academic in the field of Qualitative Research and Performative Social Science. In response to my explaining that I was struggling to discover the best and most sensitive way of presenting the material, and being

overwhelmed by the BNIM process he suggested I consider: "*Pen portraits*," a method used by Hollway and Jefferson as a creative option. Their 'free-association narrative interview method' is in sympathy with Wengraf's approach as is their overarching emphasis on a *gestalt* interpretation of the interviews. However, their presentation of their findings as pen portraits offered me an inspiring solution that I could appropriate as a method with the Penwithen project.

The pen portrait aimed to write something which made the person come alive for a reader. It would be largely descriptive and provide enough information against which subsequent interpretations could be assessed. In a way, a pen portrait serves as a substitute 'whole' for a reader who will not have access to the raw data but who needs to have a grasp of the person who figures in a case study if anything said about them is going to be meaningful:

> "…In our view, consistent with a theorisation of the defended subject, it is important for summaries not to iron out inconsistencies, contradictions and puzzles. To grasp a person through the 'whole' of what we know about them does not imply that he or she is consistent, coherent or rational. The form of a person's accounts (or whatever other data we have about their life) may become visible by concentrating on these 'fractures." (Hollway et al, 2001:8)

The notion of pen portraits provided a way forward, a *gestalt* approach to the work. Where I could work through the first two sections of each interview, bring in cultural links where appropriate and clarify details from the third 'pick up' section. I was then able to interpret the work using only what was given to create outlines of each participant. I decided to call my adaptation of pen portraits 'Life Sketches'.

2.6 Ethics

Ethic**s** were a priority throughout the research. I needed to be mindful regarding the issue of disclosure. Some interviewees being involved in criminal acts, and those in recovery might not want to break their anonymity. Every participant was shown what was written with regard to themselves, and given an ethics form in which they could decide if they wanted to be named or have a pseudonym.

After all of the primary interviews were completed, because the content was so personal I spoke individually to every interviewee and checked they had read carefully what was written. A couple of the Penwithen Boys said "I trust you ". I explained that wasn't enough and insisted they read it. With one person I was candid and told him that I had, in context,

included that his *then* language was of a racist nature. All the participants then read the passages associated with themselves. To my surprise I was met with not only affirmation that I could use their names but also how proud they were to be included in the thesis.

> …have just spent the last couple of hours reading and rereading the attachment and I would like to just say thank you again.
> Rereading it brought lots of good things back and being able to read what Darren and Nick said and how at times our words kinda mixed together as we got the same kind of things and thoughts from this was awesome.
>
> Anything else I can do please message me and I will endeavour to reply swiftly …" (Stanaway: 2021 email correspondence)

2.7 Secondary sources

Secondary sources entail analysing other models of practice and literature. I focus on the work of Brazilian practitioner Paulo Freire as his methodology has relevance for engaging with marginalised groups; in particular "object to subject". I was first introduced to Paulo Freire by my friend drama practitioner Marcia Pompeo. She gave me this gift. After watching my work with Vita Nova she said 'your work is Freirean'. I didn't really know then what she meant. Subsequent reading of Freire has lead me to become a great admirer of his work. In his moving last interview in 1996, Freire describes himself as a 'Curious Being'; his thoughts on the need for 'tolerance' and the importance of enabling people to speak their own words so that they can 'articulate their voices …in the struggle against injustice' are ideals that resonate with me as a drama worker with marginalised groups. It is why I see Freire as the backbone to my research. Macedo in his introduction to Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* writes:

> In essence, educators who refuse to transform the ugliness of human misery, social injustices, and inequalities, invariably become educators for domestication who, as Sartre poignantly suggests, "will change nothing and will serve no one, but will succeed only in finding moral comforts in my malaise" (Macedo, 1998: xxxii).

Many aspects of Freire's view of the world fit with the experience of the Penwithen Boys:

> …dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. (Freire, 1970: 70)

Freire's 'conscientization' links into the notion of autoethnography. Having an understanding of self, being reflective and critically aware can release self- knowledge leading to change and transformation. McCowan states with reference to Freire's concept of conscientization:

> This is the processes of gaining critical awareness as a means of transforming society: to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one that makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.
> (Freire, 1972: 29 in McCowan, 2006:65)
>
> Conscientization in relation to the individual learner is the process of developing the sense of being a subject, of appreciating one's ability to intervene in external reality. The conscientized person is 'subject of the processes of change, actor in the management and development of the educational process, critical and reflexive, capable of understanding his or her reality in order to transform it….'" (Gajardo, 1991:40 in Mc Cowan 2006 p65)

It was imperative to place the Penwithen project within the landscape of other case studies in the discipline of social research and drama. I discovered little research in the field, which highlights the significance of this particular study. However, I will be investigating three notable pieces of research:

- ***Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education*** **(DICE) 2010 (3.1 p 75)**
  A study encompassing a wide range of European drama practice.

- ***Being Other*****: UK 2015: *Being Other - The Effectiveness of Arts Based Approaches in Engaging with Disaffected Young People*. (3.2 p 81)**
  A longitudinal study spanning a relatively short period of time. A recent UK report viewing arts projects with marginalised young people.

- ***Cooling Conflict*****: 1996–2004: (3.3 p89)**
  The Australian strand of an international project, investigating the effects of a drama project addressing conflict management within a mainstream setting.

2.8 Case Study

This study adopts a case study strategy. The case study of the Penwithen Boys being at the heart of the research.

> In a case study design the 'case' you select becomes the basis of a thorough, holistic and in-depth exploration of the aspect(s) that you want to find out about. It is an approach: "*In which a particular instance or a few carefully selected cases are studied intensively."* (Gilbert 2008:36 in Kumar 2011; 126)

I was able to interrogate the Penwithen Project with evidential material from of 2001/ 2002. Significantly the Life Sketches were created from recent interviews undertaken some eighteen plus years later.

The secondary sources such as Freire and the three identified longitudinal projects, have served as a context to test and make sense of the Penwithen Project findings.

The autoethnography approach I followed has meant that I am part of the Penwithen case study in my capacity as drama facilitator. The lens being focused onto my own personal working practice has produced another canvas in which to view Penwithen. In particular Vita Nova and other work I have delivered with marginalised groups to discover if patterns emerge regarding effectiveness of interventionist drama work. My involvement in such applied drama/theatre work spanning over thirty years, with those who are excluded or on the edges of society, gives a strong longitudinal context for the work. Whilst acknowledging how my approaches have shifted with experience in the field. No two stories, projects are ever the same. Grinnell, usefully states in relation to data collection:

> A case study according to Grinnell (1981:302) is characterized by a very flexible and open–ended technique of data collection and analysis (Kumar, 2011: 126)

2.9 Longitudinal study

That my study is fundamentally a longitudinal study is pertinent. There are few accounts of applied drama practice being tracked over a significant time lapse. Robson points out possible difficulties with longitudinal studies, such as the possibility of refusal of an interview. This was not the case. All the boys I found welcomed the opportunity to speak. Robson states:

> When the main interest is in describing or assessing change or development over time, some form of Longitudinal Research is the method of choice. The same set of people, and/or the same issue or situation, is studied over a period of time. This form of research tends to be difficult to carry out and is demanding on the time and

> resources of the investigator. 'Mortality' within the sample can be a problem, not so much in terms of actual death of people, but more their inaccessibility or non-availability through geographical moves or an unwillingness to continue co-operating with the study." (Robson, 1996: 50)

Certainly, my plan to present an in-depth case study on the Penwithen Project, interpreting the data of 2002 and then adding new interview material from the present day has formed the basis of this research. Linking into my interviewing structure, a modification of BNIM methodology, it is useful to note that Wengraf states:

> "BNIM is particularly suited for longitudinal process studies, since it asks for retrospective whole stories and particular incident experiences prior to the first BNIM interview. It can access vanished and mutated times, places, states of feeling and ways of living." (Wengraf,2007: 16)

My analysis of the interviews within the 'Life Sketches' (*see Chapter 6*) retrieved strong stories relating to the impact of applied drama over a substantial period.

> "*Time passes. Listen. Time passes.*" (Thomas 1954)

There is now a postscript to this chapter. I realised on my research journey that urgency was required to collect the data. Much has changed over the years; the closure of Penwithen Boys School, the BCCA and the redundancy of staff at Penwithen and BCCA and alarmingly the notion of mortality. Two interviews were now impossible. Elin, one of the original pioneers of Vita Nova. She played the 'mother' and later played the 'Raven' *in* '*Scratchin' the Surface (Appendix 7).* She died in early 2016, after an eight-year struggle with alcohol that at that time had rendered her homeless. While she was part of Vita Nova she was a strong member of the group and very articulate about the horrors of drugs and alcohol. But drama had not saved her. She was 52. For a while we can definitely say that theatre and drama gave meaning to her life; that she was highly successful as part of the troupe. Elin was in the production of *Scratchin' the Surface* that performed at Penwithen Boys. Being involved in Vita Nova was one of the most productive periods of her life.

The Penwithen Boys' teacher, another strong woman, Eileen Tucker. She was responsible for inviting me to work with the boys after they had seen Elin and the others perform at their school. I spoke to her at the very beginning of my research, saying I wanted to make a documentary. She was excited because, like myself, she told me the project had impacted on her life in a profound way. I had wanted to save talking to her about the work so that the later interview would be fresh. If only I had known that her time was limited, I would have made that journey back then. Sadly, she contracted cancer and died, also in 2016. I was

contacted by Jan Morgan who worked with Eileen and was very much part of the project. I went to both of their funerals. Two coffins both covered with flowers.

2.10 Limitations

My key limitations when embarking on my methodological journey were: the problems of tracking down my interviewees, the labour-intensive approach to interviewing, the matter of ethics, the issues of mortality and the rigors of personally undertaking self-analysis to enable me to scrutinise my role as facilitator.

To conclude, autoethnography was my overarching approach in discovering if applied drama can have a lasting impact on participants' lives.

Chapter Three: The landscape of longitudinal studies in applied drama. Literature Review

Introduction

> What you're doing, longitudinal research on the effects of applied theatre, is one of the most important bits of research you could be doing, because yes, it is one of the most neglected (because hardest) areas to look at. (Email correspondence from John O'Toole 12.9.19)

Before unpacking the interviews in detail and presenting the Penwithen case study, it is necessary for me to present a context, a gateway into the existing cannon of longitudinal research on applied drama. The landscape I paint is created by the three projects discussed here. Interwoven within this, are references to my own varied working practice and the contemporary Penwithen interviews. The full 'Life Sketches' derived from the interviews can be found in Chapter 6.

There is a paucity of research on the long-term impact of applied theatre even though we know that countless important projects have been occurring around the world for years. In particular, it has been hard to discover projects that are able to track the effects of applied drama work after a substantial period. In my quest Professor Helen Nicholson states:

> There are so many examples of long-term engagements with communities, but I don't think have been regarded systematically as longitudinal studies in the way you describe.
> (Email correspondence from Helen Nicholson 3.11.19)

Added to this Dr Kathleen Gallagher from Canada stated:

> What interesting work you have been engaged in. I'm sorry to say, however, that I do not know of any longitudinal studies in applied theatre. You might be breaking ground here!
> (Email correspondence from Kathleen Gallagher 27.11.19)

Longitudinal tracking is problematic even when there is a great desire for it to occur. Most facilitators in the field want to discover the legacy of their interventions. Here I need to clarify that there are two main possibilities for applied work. On-going regular workshops in designated settings with usually a turn-over of participants. For example, the regular

workshops at Vita Nova or the sessions in care homes, refugee camps or for street children. The second is project work, which is invariably reliant on funding for a fixed period of time. For most applied projects the set time for evaluation is shortly after the work has been completed. Therefore, within the management of a specific project, time will be allocated for reflection and investigation of data gathered during or directly after the project. Evaluation which requires number crunching, making sure objectives are met by the funders, is often a pressurised experience. Delivery of the final payment of a grant is frequently subject to the completion of the final report. This is the situation with Arts Council England Grants. The gaining of the last tranche of the funding can lead to a level of artistic licence or the stretching of reality in order to hit the often-unrealistic targets that are required. I, like many other practitioners, have found that the required evaluation at the end of a project has influenced the way the initial project is planned. The end of project report is invariably the conclusion of that specific enterprise. This usually delivers a picture of the success of many interventions shortly after their completion. Sustainability is hard to achieve with the constant need for re-applications to extend work. This can be heart breaking as typically the end of the project is when trust has been built and a real sense of community created. Sometimes follow up work can be achieved based on the first section of work being a 'pilot project'. However, the emphasis then becomes on getting a new angle for the funders. Finding the 'new' perspective can be detrimental in establishing what has proved to be effective in the pilot but needs more time to embed. This state of affairs is very frustrating for both the people you are working with and the organisers. It has been a circle of events that I have experienced in the field many times. I am not saying that practitioners should not be accountable; far from it. Evaluation is vital for our work. It is only through reflecting on our practice that we can develop and grow. It is also necessary in proving its worth in a time that is hostile to alternative and creative ways of enabling people to speak out and be seen. 'To be seen', was an expression I heard a great deal within a healing ceremony I took part in. The words 'I see you' struck a chord. Most of the participants involved in Theatre for Development (TfD) or applied drama feel invisible, in the shadow-lands. The importance of groups and individuals being recognised as human beings is a key part of our work. There is a need for a revised system when it comes to funding and evaluating drama work in the community. Perhaps large institutions such as The Arts Council should offer professional evaluators to support in the assessments that are often the last part of an exhausting project. Such institutions could take on follow up evaluation that goes beyond the obsession with how many people attended, how many people were this or that. Instead, a radical approach, how many people felt human again? Felt noticed?

The investment in long-term work with a few can pay mighty dividends in changing people's lives, in supporting participants in living healthy existences without the need of prison, rehabilitation centres or long spells in hospitals.
Thankfully the Penwithen Project was not a hostage to funders.
The case studies I have discovered that track long-term effects, Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education (DICE), 'Being Other' and Cooling Conflict, I use to analyse if a picture emerges that describes consequences of applied theatre work over an extended duration of time. The outcomes of the Penwithen interviews I used as data to test any parallels and common themes that locate the impact that applied drama can have on individuals and groups after a long period.

3.1 DICE 2010: A well-funded EU formal and rigorously undertaken research study of educational drama work across Europe involving 12 counties.

DICE is a necessary inclusion within this thesis as a major investigation into the importance of educational theatre and drama within society across Europe. A piece of evaluation, which fitted into the European vision of offering creative opportunities to young people. DICE is considered to be: "*The largest research study that has been conducted in the field of educational theatre and drama so far*." (DICE 2010: 21). The ages of the participants were 13-16-years. The reason for targeting this *'adolescent cohort'* was that*: "From the point of view of developmental psychology these are the formative years for attitudes (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs)."* (*ibid*: 27). DICE was: "*Interested in how educational theatre and drama can help in this very sensitive period.*" (*ibid*:27). The boys from the Penwithen project were between 14 -16 years, so they fit into this bracket.

This huge investigation occurred in 2010 six years after Latvia joined the EU and nine years after the start of the Penwithen Boys Project. Currently, in the UK, it feels sad to read the report that was produced with such a collective European outlook. DICE's purpose is to champion the benefits of educational theatre and drama work with a view of introducing policy to influence investment for young people across the EU. It's hard to imagine where the UK will be placed when we are outside of the European Union.

A variety of drama interventions in a mix of settings, mainly schools, alongside control groups with no drama interventions, took place across Europe to measure the potential success of the drama work. The 'hypothesis' being 'that educational theatre and drama has an impact on five of the eight 'Lisbon Key Competences'. Significantly DICE adds its own

extra sixth competence to the selected Lisbon ones, which is "*Theatre and drama are fundamentally concerned with the universal competence of what it is to be human*." (DICE 2010: 6) This additional element is an important inclusion as it promotes the ethos that is at the heart of most applied drama work. The exploration of what it means to be alive; to make sense of life. Placing the Penwithen experience, as a condensed project, alongside DICE, to test these competences is useful. In so doing it's necessary to note our project didn't have a control group as such. However, for the Latvian Section of the Penwithen case study, only six out of the seven boys went to the festival. Bradley didn't make it. I was unable to locate and interview him. The view is that he is homeless. This might suggest that not being involved in the cultural excursion to Latvia may have had some bearing on what happened to him in later life.

In the report *The DICE has been cast* it states that these Competences formed the bedrock of DICE's investigation, its purpose: *(See Appendix 2 for Competences)*

> To demonstrate with cross-cultural quantitative and qualitative research that educational theatre and drama is a powerful tool to improve the Key Competences. The research was conducted with almost five thousand young people aged 13-16 years. (DICE, 2010: 5).
>
> To compare theatre and drama activities in education in different countries and help the transfer of know-how with the mobility of experts and expertise. (*ibid* 5).
>
> The report states that research was conducted by twelve partners (led by Hungary with partners: Czech Republic, Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom. (*ibid:*5).

It is also useful to reflect on the notion of Longitudinal methodology as defined by DICE:

> Our research applied a Longitudinal cross –cultural design, which basically means that we have been measuring the effect of educational data and drama in different cultures (cross cultural) over a period of time (longitudinal). (*Ibid:26*)

The report goes on to state when reviewing the whole evaluation of DICE:

> In summary: for one-occasion research groups the research period was four weeks, for continuous ones it was 3 to 4 months. Although the measured period was short, it was long enough to indicate if any changes occurred, and to prognosticate what effect that specific programme would have on a long-term basis. (If there is a minor but significantly positive change within four months, we can expect that a major change in the same direction would be likely over several years. (*ibid*: 29)

This is an important statement as it claims that short term, i.e. 3- 4 months, outcomes may be considered significant, if change occurs within that period, to have the likelihood to

continue over several years. In the case of Penwithen, we were working with the lads over a period of 11 months. The contact time was increased as we got closer to the performances. The outcomes recorded in 2002 were very positive. (*See Chapters 4&5*) On revisiting the participants after more than 17 years their positivity has increased. Remarkably, as now mature adults, they have gained insight and perspective on themselves and their peers as participants back in 2002. Some of their recollections fit into the DICE competencies.

I thought that 'Entrepreneurship' may not be particularly relevant to Penwithen, as I wasn't certain how deeply the drama work may have affected their long-term futures. However, after listening to the interviews I see that 'Entrepreneurship' is significant within our results. Nick, reflecting on how the achievement of their play impacted on his life:

> "it gives that little confidence boost that you need. You know, even with like job interviews, or, you know, just getting at everyday life I think." (Burton: 2019)

Nick also recalled how the project had a positive impact on his behaviour outside of work at the BCCA, which links into ***Competency No2: Learning to learn.*** There is particular relevance for the Penwithen project when reflecting on the section ***No1: Communication in the mother tongue***

> Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form. (*op. cit.*: 18)

And also…

No3: Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence.

> These competences cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. (*ibid.*: 18)

The boys found articulating their feelings difficult. In fact, their inability to express their emotions in a positive way had led most of them into a great deal of trouble within school, home and the community, resulting in their exclusion from mainstream education. Nick clearly describes his situation: "*I couldn't control my anger*." (Burton: 2019). Nick, seventeen years later, shows insight into his peers within the drama group. In particular, how desperately hard and difficult communication was for them and how the project helped them to lose some of their inhibitions. Drama gave them a medium to channel their emotions and find a new way of expression and that, for a couple of the lads who

were7deeply introverted, was a massive milestone. They: *"Sort of come out their shell. And then, as I say, everyone got a lot closer."* (Burton: 2019)

On another level travelling to Latvia gave them another opportunity to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts.' (DICE 2010: 18)

In Latvia they found themselves in a situation where they had to communicate outside of their narrow cultural circle. If they were to 'chat up' the Latvian or Swedish girls, they needed to find more gracious ways of operating. Here were young women who knew about theatre. They were challenged to make conversation. They needed to start talking about their play if they were going to impress. Their European friends were strong English speakers; in some cases, their vocabulary in a second tongue was more extensive and sophisticated than the boys. The lads had no clue about other languages or even where Latvia was.

The notion of conflict has implications for a group of excluded young people. Drama brought this eclectic group of boys together as they took part in a common endeavour; the making of their play '*Til It All Went Wrong'*. In my interview with Darren, he illustrates how the group came together through the drama process and how they became *a 'cohort' (See Life-sketch Attard p157)*

After a few days in Latvia the lads had made friends. They were able to talk to strangers. They had to question their abrupt and often rude approach to communicating. They were accepting flowers given as a traditional gift from their Latvian hosts.

The intercultural experience for the boys, coming out of a predominantly white, British area was a very new experience in all ways: food, language and socially. They had been shocked by the poverty in Latvia. They were joined by my then five-year-old son, Muiruri, who is dual heritage. The boys were, to an extent, starved of a wider exposure of culture. They were limited by their life experience. Ignorance was a large part of their experience. The drama experience opened their horizons.

No5: Cultural expression also has strong links for the project:

> Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts. Self-expression through the variety of media … a strong sense of identity is the basis for respect and [an] open attitude to diversity of cultural expression. (DICE 2010: 18)

Looking back, the Penwithen Boys were only on the very first level of grasping, not only what drama was but also what they had actually achieved. They had their play which was heavily based around their cultural experiences, involving hip-hop music and pseudo-American drug gang slang. It was physical. It involved a rejection of school and a need to hang with the

'right 'people. Their play became a passport for travel. They were able, through being invited to the Baltic Bell, to experience other cultures through the language of the arts. They had a fast-track induction into Baltic culture whilst offering their own picture of what it is to be a teenager in 2002 in the UK. Their play gave them their own sense of identity. It celebrated their realities.

DICE produced a 'brief summary', listing 22 "*Areas where drama is seen to be beneficial*." (DICE 2010: 6) *(see Appendix 3 for DICE's brief summary of outcomes.)* Most, if not all, the identified areas of success are already understood by those involved in the drama field. Leading drama practitioner Cecily O'Neill echoes this sentiment within the DICE report:

> Generally, the results are unsurprising. Because drama is essentially a dialogic form, drama activities are likely to promote verbal and social interaction. … Collaboration is essential, as is the need to overcome frustration and approach complex tasks constructively. It is almost inevitable that social competence will be promoted through the work." (DICE 2010: 71)

Although 'unsurprising' it is important that these benefits are noted in such a significant document. The list not only includes areas such as 'creativity and empathy' as one might expect, but also spreads into other territories such as 'voting and employment'.

Certainly, the evidence from the interviews with Penwithen Boys strongly confirmed some of DICE's findings, in particular feeling "*more confident in communication"* and "*likely to feel that they are creative.*" Significantly, we can also identify strong positive outcomes for "*More tolerant towards minorities and foreigners.*" (*ibid.*6) and that the participants felt 'better at home'. We have evidence that this was a definite outcome from being part of the drama group although the notion of home was complex for some of the boys. As I have stated in Dan's foster Mother letter. *(See p 141)* Nick's parents seeing him in a positive light when he performed in '*Til It All Went Wrong.* The group, in particular Nick's transition in outlook, shifted in their perceptions of people with different ethic identities.

DICE states that: "S*tudents who regularly participate in educational theatre and drama activities are more empathic: they show concern for others and they are more able to change their perspective*" (DICE 2010:44). The Penwithen Boys grew to know each other and became more tolerant through the drama work. This statement by Dan definitely demonstrates how trust and empathy grew during the drama process:

> "… If I saw Nick was having a hard time I would go and talk to him we had a chat …Instead of blowing our tops we could diffuse situations a bit better because we both knew a little bit about each other…" (Stanaway: 2018)

DICE also identifies that when looking at the ten most frequent group-specific topics it was: "*Striking that the drama descriptions of completely different programmes share common values, and opposing opinions appear in very few cases, only 2." This was an "extremely rare outcome,*" when dealing with such a "*large sample.*" (DICE 2010: 62). These themes included: '*Creating a safe environment for young people where they can behave freely is the basis for fruitful work.*' (*ibid*.63). For Penwithen the resonance with some of the areas is very powerful. Although the boys were not literally from a war zone, as with the Palestinian young people, they were from highly charged situations where conflict was part of everyday life. Safety was vital for the drama group; for them to be able to 'open up' and trust. The drama process led to them exploring their life stories in the sanctuary of the BCCA. This, in turn, led them to not only feeling secure but, to be able to create a piece of drama*, 'Til it all Went Wrong,* that had the purpose of trying to prevent conflict by offering a message about feeling confident in yourself and not being swayed by peer pressure.

> Educational theatre and drama work builds up trust by generating a feeling of community and group identification. Children experience the power of collaboration, co-operation and joint creation. They gain experience of understanding the problems and ideas of others. Educational theatre and drama work increases children's self-confidence and capacity for dialogue. (*ibid*: 63).

This quote is substantiated by what took place within the Penwithen project. The boys' collaborative investment in their drama work, emerged once trust had been established. Their play became a vehicle to assist them in making sense of their life experiences. This led to them gaining self-belief.

DICE flags up how, through: "*Educational theatre and drama work, socially-disadvantaged children can experience aspects of belonging to a constructive group.*" (*ibid:* 64). This notion of constructiveness or, as I have called it, purposefulness was vital to the work with Penwithen and also other groups such as Vita Nova and The Poole Passion where building a sense of family within the group was paramount. DICE puts this succinctly: "*The main emphasis is on forming a community where creativity and belonging to the group are equally important*." (*ibid*: 64). I would add to this, that forming a community leads to a strong dialogue with the wider community. The camaraderie created gives confidence to the participants to share and discuss their stories. This creates a dynamic dialogue with the wider community. This notion of dialogue also links positively into DICE's assertion that the: "*Main asset is the individual's own experience*." (*ibid*: 64). Working with truth and reality with groups is vital to giving a voice that recognizes people's worlds and identities. This has

been evidenced with the Penwithen Boys and all the social inclusion groups I have worked with over the years.

> "…a production telling a story that would wasn't about one of us individually but bits of our lives, bits of things we'd seen umm how we interpreted what we'd seen in our young lives a lot of us have or had quite difficult upbringings, quite disruptive." (Stanaway: 2018)

3.2: 'Being Other' UK 2015. A project that worked with disaffected young people.

Being Other is a short and localised report in contrast to the macro–European DICE report. It again reinforces the liberating effect that the arts can have with marginalised groups. *Being Other* was carried out in two settings, Pegasus Theatre and OYAP Trust (Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership Trust) working across Oxfordshire (Tawell *et al*, 2015: 4). The report encompasses five art-based projects. The research was requested by Pegasus Theatre and OYAP and undertaken by a team from Oxford University. The aim of the investigation: "*To examine the effectiveness of their creative arts and theatre programmes that are designed to offer alternatives for marginalised young people.*" (*ibid*: 4). The research relates to the Penwithen Project in as much as this inquiry is completely focused on arts interventions with 'disaffected young people'. However, the work that is being analysed is broader, not just drama but performing and visual arts. Their engagement is with a wider age range. I will therefore concentrate on two projects within *Being Other*: *Looking Forward* and *Added Extra*. Both were based at Pegasus Theatre and utilised applied drama with teenagers. Part of OYAP's mission is focused on enabling: "*Young people to realise their own personal, social and leadership skills, grow in confidence and build self-esteem and resilience.*" (*ibid*: 23.) For young people who are identified as being disaffected, 'resilience' is a vital word. Many people in so-called marginalised groups for a variety of reasons, mainly I believe associated with low self-esteem, grapple with resilience. This is why the completion of projects is so important; to prove to people that they can 'stick' at things. That, if it works in a drama project it can potentially work in 'real' life. Boal's words are useful: "…*the theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but it is surely a rehearsal for the revolution.*" (Boal, 1979: 122). The revolution being with the individuals. Not surprisingly, *Being Other* also cites Boal, as his practice of following Freire's pedagogical philosophy is entwined with the notion that interventions that challenge repression can lead to profound, life-changing perspectives. I found one of OYAP's statements particularly powerful:

> They make sure that there are opportunities for young people to enjoy "small Victories" so that they come to understand what success feels like. (Tawell *et al,* 2015: 23)

When working at the cutting edge it is sometimes, at least to begin with, only the 'small victories' that arts facilitators/practitioners can hope for. The 'small victories' are huge if they are about preventing someone from ending up in an institution or that a person feels good about themselves as a human being …subject and not object.

The Oxford University team's methodological approach was to:

…present analyses of these data alongside verbatim accounts in order to help further the understanding of the benefits of such provision for some of the most vulnerable young people in our society." *(ibid*: 4)

The period of observation of the projects took place in each setting during October 2014 to February 2015 (*ibid:* 8) and involved talking to both the participants and professionals engaged with the project. The report states that the project's instigated aims in both Pegasus Theatre and OYAP were:

…to enable young people who find it hard to work with others to work as a team, learn negotiation skills, and develop the ability to listen to and appreciate other people's contributions and points of view." (Howard, 2015). (*ibid:* 4).

The monitoring of the *Being Other* projects took place within a time frame of five months. This is similar to the monitoring of the drama interventions tested by DICE.
In the case of DICE:

> Two longitudinal investigations were conducted in order to demonstrate some robust effects of educational theatre and drama activities on key competences: a 4-month-long design for continuous and a short-time (1-month-long) design for one occasion activities. (DICE 2010: 28).

In both *Being Other* and DICE their length of evaluation period, although stated as longitudinal, is relatively short in comparison with the investigation regarding Penwithen over nineteen years. Yet the conclusions in all three appear to be singing the same song; that there is a unique possibility that Applied Drama can give meaning and enrichment to lives, especially for those who are, for whatever reason, 'other'.

The two studies relating to the Penwithen Project, *Looking Forward* and *Added Extra* both took place at the well-established Pegasus Theatre. Part of this establishment's intentions are:

> …to create fully rounded young adults who go out into the world and have confidence, they're young leaders, they're confident they have a voice, they're confident they can be listened to and they can perform, they know that creativity is what will help them to do it, that's our aim. (*ibid*: 7).

The necessity at Pegasus Theatre 'of knowing the group' was very much in line with the ethos of the Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team (BTIE) and The Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts (BCCA) as a whole. It is an obvious human factor, but as stated by Pegasus Theatre: "*This personalised approach helps to foster a strong sense of inclusivity within activities and community identity through the theatre*" (*ibid*: 7). Certainly, this was the case for the Penwithen Boys who were so much more than just 'clients' at the BCCA and in the festival in Latvia. They felt included, part of something. The sense of creating a community, some groups such as members of The Poole Passion and Vita Nova have described as 'family'. Creating meaningful groups is a key factor with applied theatre projects, where working together takes place on many levels.
Within DICE' s findings it states:

> With the help of educational theatre and drama work, socially-disadvantaged children can experience aspects of belonging to a constructive group. This membership of the group enables the participants to think about taking responsibility for themselves and each other, and thereby to develop their own self-reliance and independence. The main emphasis is on forming a community where creativity and belonging to the group are equally important." (DICE 2010: 64).

One staff member from Pegasus Theatre remarked how: "*role play in drama can lead to empathy and understanding,*" which she cites as the allowance of "*subjective exchanges*." (Tawell *et al,* 2015: 7). She goes on to say:

> We stop objectifying and we start communicating those things that can't be seen in the objective… by playing another role, by creating somebody else we, create a platform for that intersubjective exchange where we're taking on the views of another person and actually thinking about what they mean for us or communicating our views through performance and sharing those through performance and kind of creating again a way of sharing the subjective with our audience. (*ibid*: 7).

This statement encapsulates what applied drama can achieve when it leads to a performance that is then shared with others. It comes back to the notion of dialogue. The drama allows for dialogue on several levels: an inner dialogue, with their immediate group and with the wider community. It is also a necessary observation because it illustrates how the language of drama can be used to portray the unseen, the invisible. Freire identified: "Dialogue, as the encounter among men to "name" the world, as a fundamental precondition for their true humanization." (Freire, 1970: 118).

This dialogue, communication, is essential for people's growth. For those who I have worked with who are visibly starved of culture, we have evidence that drama can make that conversation happen. The cultural undernourishment I refer to is particularly apparent in the marginalised. *Being Other* articulates this circumstance as:

> Much of the research suggests that marginalisation in education has negative long-term consequences for young people in terms of social engagement in the wider world, academic attainment, emotional development, and future employment (e.g., Ball, 2006: Duckworth & Schoon, 2012: Lumby, 2013: Stamou *et al*., 2014)." (Tawell *et al*, 2015: 4).

The dominant sense of failure that young people carry around, especially in settings such as PRUs, EBP and Youth Offenders, is a phenomenon I have witnessed repeatedly over my thirty years of practice. Dan from Penwithen in his recent interview reflected on his feelings as a teenager, as being someone who was stigmatised and ostracised… "*we were the edges of society*." (Stanaway, D: 2018). Importantly, he states how this position shifted due to his involvement in their play *'Til It All Went Wrong* which led to an acceptance by others and crucially themselves. (Chapter 6)

Being Other also highlights the benefits of extra-curricular arts-based work: "*Outside of the school environment.*"

> The creative arts can offer some young people who are perhaps most at risk of becoming disaffected a powerful set of tools for creating contexts that may provide them with the opportunity to re-negotiate identities and hence re-engage with school." (Daniels & Downes, 2014: Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006). (Tawell *et al*, 2015: 4).

For the participants in the Penwithen Boy's project the key word here is 'engage' as it was clear that they had all gone beyond re-engaging with mainstream education. However, there is clear evidence that they were able to connect better at Penwithen, and, through touring their play, they gained the courage to revisit the establishments that some of them had been excluded from. The fact that the activities, although in school time, happened in a different environment, the BCCA, was very substantial in the success of the project as it offered a

variety of different possibilities; a professional space and non-judgmental people to work with.

Notably within *Being Other* it states that all the listed projects consisted of young people working: *"In collaboration with peers and adults to free themselves from the fear of failure and the constraints of their current interactions with the social world.*" (Wright & Rasmussen, 2001) (*ibid*: 7). What Cooper describes as a process of 'resignification' reveals understanding for the Penwithen Boys:

> The development of the new and positive identities as a consequence of relationships and experiences which undermined the pupil's original negative view of self, by revealing evidence of desirable, positive qualities. (1993:139) (ibid: 4).

The 'positive' had become so buried for the Penwithen Boys, as I found so often with other vulnerable groups such as Vita Nova, that a ritual of sabotage took place in order to fight the possibility of success. What Nick expresses so clearly when interviewed 17 years later about the drama project is, I believe, an example of 'resignification':

> "…it was life changing for me… … it gives you a little voice behind your sort of shadow if you want to put it that way." (Burton, N.: 2019).

The creation of a piece of theatre was a clear goal within the 'Looking Forward' project; a weekly group of vulnerable young women, ranging from secondary school to post-school age. It is interesting to consider the impact of the project being gender specific. Could 'Looking Forward' and the Penwithen project have worked if the groups had been mixed? Their facilitators in 'Looking Forward' were also all women. With our project all the participants were boys but their teachers and myself, as facilitator, were women. Their mentors, on the other hand were all male. Looking back, I think it would be hard to envisage the group if it had been a gender-mixed dynamic. The introduction of females in Latvia did have a positive effect on the boys, but it was very tied up with an emotional approach to them. Several of the boys fell in love. The boys had been segregated in school, so a mixed group of participants would have been an 'enforced' situation and I believe they would have found it hard to trust or feel safe about sharing their feelings in the presence of girls. Without the journey of creating their play in the UK and touring it, the boys would not have been able to conduct themselves with the young people at the Latvian festival. They wouldn't have had the confidence they gained through the achievement of making the play

and the social skills they had learnt with working with people outside of their circle, which included not just the team at the BCCA but schools, universities and the British Council. The stated aims for 'Looking Forward' were:

> To increase self-esteem and confidence in participants
> To enhance their ability to cope with and manage feelings
> To improve their ability to positively interact with others
> and provide an opportunity for achievement and success.
> (Tawell *et al*, 2015)

These aspirations were close to those of Penwithen. (*see Appendix 4: 3.2)*. From the data received through the current interviews, some outcomes have endured. Nick commented how the confidence he gained through the project as remained in "everyday life." (Burton, N.: 2019).

Positive outcomes in all the projects within 'Being Other' was a 'safe place' where trust can be nurtured, a vital element in the mix of a successful applied project. It was also noted by the project leaders: 'The importance of achievement' as a key outcome, even though many of the teenagers found it hard, due lack of encouragement in the past, to receive praise. For the Penwithen lads, after we had gone through the pain barrier of their sabotage attempts, in time it became evident that not only did they begin to accept but to love the praise they received. The lads felt real pride: "It was an achievement, massive achievement." (Stanaway, D: 2018) As one leader from the 'Looking Forward' project suggested that the:

> … unique thing about Pegasus, is that it's not focused on the project at the end, it's the journey and that for us is the most important thing. (Tawell *et al*, 2015: 8).

Many applied drama practitioners would be in agreement, about the 'journey' being of utmost importance. However the end, the show, the performance and the sharing are the vital drivers. The working towards an 'outing' of the work, maintains the engagement and stimulates the work because there is a real purpose within the activity. The achievement factor, which is so valuable, comes from the completion, the sharing. This does not mean that all projects can produce polished, finished products. In some cases, the sharing, as it was with *The Edge project* 2002, with a group of extremely vulnerable and disturbed young people, both Darren and Nick from the Penwithen project acted as mentors, resulted in a gentle sharing of their work with a small and sympathetic audience. Within that delicate performance, the group stepped up in a way they had not done during the process. The end was a real risk, as it nearly always is when working with young people whose self-esteem is

rock bottom. But the alchemy of performance paid off. DICE illuminates the value of performance, noting the sense of achievement and development of self-confidence:

> …after public performances, the children are full of energy and enthusiasm and willing to continue the theatre experience. The teachers/leaders notice many positive changes in children's personalities: they become more self-confident, are more open to others, more tolerant and cooperative. As they feel what it is like to be part of a group, their social sensitivity and ability to co-operate develop. They learn how to express themselves, and they experience appreciation for their work. They learn that their decisions have consequences and experience what it is like to be responsible for themselves and for the group. (DICE 2010: 66).

'Added Extra' was a very small, mixed project with similar goals to that of 'Looking Forward'. 'Added Extra' echoed the impact of achievement and a safe space, where labels were removed and all participants were treated as equals (*ibid*.: 13). Although not all of the participants had stayed the course, in 'Added Extra' the project again highlighted some beneficial outcomes that also related strongly to the Penwithen project. 'Added Extra' similarly worked towards a devised performance. The leaders worked with six participants: "*Three were identified by Pegasus as vulnerable or challenging young people and the other three as less vulnerable, 'model' peers.*" (*ibid*: 13). Together they created a script using *Macbeth* as the stimulus. The 'model students' were there to work as positive role models. With Penwithen our 'helper', Darren, could not at that time have been titled 'model' but he certainly became a positive bridge between the teenage and adult world. We also used role models from Vita Nova as mentors. There is definitely a positivity in having mentors/role models who work 'in' with the group. It strengthens the experience. This is particularly apparent when there is low energy in a group. Having someone your age or just someone working as an equal can enable others to 'have a go'. You still need a professional facilitator but this mid-level is very useful. The process of creating a script in the 'Added Extra' project was also very constructive for the group because it was using their words. One of the participants said:

> …although we had the stimulus with Macbeth, we were writing Macbeth. It means it was our words, it was what we wanted to say, how we wanted to say it." (Millie) (*ibid*. 13).

That sense of ownership was also extremely worthwhile for the Penwithen Boys:

> "…we kind of made it (the play) was like our own our little baby our own little child we wanted to look after it … " (Stanaway: 2018)

In the summary of the work undertaken at Pegasus Theatre the dual benefits of drama are identified as being able to offer disengaged young people: "*Protection from and tools for engaging with the world.*" (*ibid*: 21). The report continued by saying that the drama interventions enabled the young people to have the "*Experience of being placed at the crux between the imagined and the real*." (*ibid*: 21) The report states how the young people within the safety of the drama space were able to: "*Trial being 'Other' rather than the people they had been, who were often constricted by their history and their lack of emotional regulation*." They cite Boal (1995:43) who argues: "*The scene, the stage, becomes the rehearsal space for real life*." (*ibid*: 21). This is a very pertinent statement declaring that drama can offer the possibilities not unlike a Cognitive Therapy approach to challenge patterns of behavior within a protective environment. It certainly allows the possibility to regard situations in almost 3D where new perspectives and empathy can be discovered. I would also add that the drama process, at least in respect of the Penwithen Boys project, was also an opportunity for them to recognize and own their past stories. Being outside the norm can be in itself important. Success doesn't have to be all about conformity but can and, I would argue, should be about challenging society's norms. The drama spaces at Pegasus Theatre and OYAP, as with the now closed BCCA and most drama spaces in schools, offer a freedom to be yourself and if you don't fit into the 'box', it's OK. Words such as 'confidence', 'self-esteem', 'resilience', 'trust' and 'engagement', and work led by skilled practitioners, are recurring themes throughout the report. This is a point that is so important when the cuts to the arts are so vigorous. The work described in 'Being Other', as with the Penwithen Boys project, had to be led by skilled practitioners who have the ability not only to instigate creativity with groups but who are also sympathetic, accepting and non-judgmental to that given group.

'Being Other's summative conclusion for all the researched arts projects again reminds us that for some young people: "*Life is experienced through a complex and sometimes chaotic lens,*" (*ibid:* 38). The richness of arts interventions in "*offering the possibility of different forms of experience"* that can shift perspectives and identities on both a social and personal level. The final statement in 'Being Other' could also be made of the Penwithen project, and makes a strong case for applied arts work that can benefit not just the individual but society as a whole:

> The participants in these programmes were identified before intervention as being at risk of losing the most fundamental characteristics that enable active involvement in society: cooperation in groups: a sense of investment in a communal process: and the ability to engage productively with the societal structures which they find

> themselves within. Arts based projects, led by skilled practitioners in arts and ummerypedagogy, enable these young people to acquire tools for self-transformation. Participation in these arts-based programmes has the potential to change young people's lives. *(Ibid*: 38).

3.3: 'Cooling Conflict': 1996–2004.

The Australian strand of an international project, with particular reference to their case study of a student named Tracey.

In this final piece of research that I am reflecting upon, to set Penwithen within the applied drama landscape, I am looking at a case study that focused on one teenager called 'Tracey' who appears in the Australian strand of an eight-year international project 'Cooling Conflict'. Within this section I also endeavour to draw together ideas from DICE and 'Being Other'. John O'Toole who was an instigator of the 'Cooling Conflict' project described briefly the context of the enterprise:

> The project with 'Tracey' was in year 4 of a 9 year project based on in-class drama workshops which used a combination of a very specific drama form - that we developed by combining process drama and forum theatre - with peer teaching. It's quite a long and complex story. (O'Toole email 30.10.19)

The research focusing on Tracey[22] took place in a secondary school called Clifton School[23] in Australia in 1999. Her involvement was identified as being an example of "*Transformational change, which sees some students make exceptional advances – such as Tracey whose involvement personifies the transformational nature of Cooling Conflict."* (O'Toole *et al.* 2004: 50). The relevance of 'Cooling Conflict' in terms of the Penwithen Project, is that it deals with similar territory such as discord, non- engagement and low self-esteem. 'Cooling Conflict' uses drama techniques as a key to understanding fictionalized, problematic situations, specifically of conflicts, an understanding that provides them with tools for managing other conflicts. Additionally, the element of 'peer led work' has worth in both projects. In the case of Penwithen, the lads shared their play, *'Til it all Went Wrong*, along with post-show question and answer sessions in schools and significantly, in their own institution. Their offer was not as sophisticated in format as the 'Cooling Conflict' project, which delivered drama to younger students based around what is described as 'Enhanced Forum Theatre'. Australian 13-year-old Tracey, although still in mainstream education and a girl was however, a teenager who, like the lads, had issues, coming from a deprived and

[22] Tracey' in Cooling Conflict is a pseudonym.
[23] 'Clifton' in Cooling Conflict is a pseudonym.

difficult past. Dan describes why the boys at Penwithen opted to get involved with the drama project: '...we'll just have a "*buckshee"* way of getting out of school', … we'll just go over there and we'll just mess about all day." (Stanaway: 2018). Similarly, Tracey had joined 'Cooling Conflict' as she had "thought it would be just so cool to get out of class and "*bludge"* for a period." (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 52). Both the lads and Tracey were taken by surprise at the deep impact drama had upon them. O'Toole states that:

> One of the most exciting aspects of the program, that schools notice when they implement it, is that students identified as troublemakers or otherwise disaffected in their normal schooling often emerge as the natural leaders and the most committed participants. Tracey, a Year 8 girl, was violent and uncontrollable, performing very poorly in her studies, a grim joke among the teachers, none of whom could control her, …. 'She's the school's worst student'… She was under threat of expulsion. (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 46).

O'Toole continues to identify how drama can communicate on a different kinaesthetic level that allows for young people such as 'Tracey' to be able to throw "*themselves into the drama – which gave their frustrated energy and impulsive imaginativeness scope.*" (*ibid*: 45). Reflecting on 'Cooling Conflict' a pattern emerges that illuminates drama as having great potential for those who have been 'written off'. A repetition appears through all the projects I have viewed: DICE, 'Being Other', 'Cooling Conflict' and Penwithen that the sense of achievement that can be fostered through drama, is vital for those with low self-esteem. The report 'Being Other' outlines the goals of the 'Looking Forward' initiative: "*To provide an opportunity for achievement and success.*" (Tawell *et al*, 2015: 8). Cooling Conflict points out that: "*The recognition and positive reinforcement Tracey subsequently received encouraged her to strive even harder*." (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 58). After a period of two years, when re-interviewing Tracey, she stated: "*My teachers all tell me that I've improved and they're proud of me all the time'."* (*ibid*: 45). She also expressed not only that she was enjoying school but that she had aspirations to '*better myself'.* The knowledge that 'positive reinforcement' through drama works has been understood for a long time. Consequently, shouldn't applied drama be available to all young people in schools and educational settings? It is not. There is a need to embrace the flexibility, fluidity and adaptable strategy to working with young people that applied drama can offer. Too often it is only by chance that applied drama interventions take place.

The 'Cooling Conflict' project decided to track Tracey, to examine if her positive responses to the work was 'just a flash in the pan' so that '*Two years later, we closely observed almost the same effect on a student with a very similar profile."* (*ibid*: 46). From a longitudinal

perspective this is a significant period of time to test the lasting effects of a drama intervention and is in tune with the Penwithen research. The methodology of the 'Cooling Conflict', similarly to Penwithen, was predominantly a qualitative implementing of the use of action research. O'Toole within the chapter reminds us of the difficulty of measuring applied drama, especially when dealing with such complex work that is dependent on personalities. Facilitators may vary in their workshop approach, particularly in areas such as intuition, being able to read and adapt quickly to a situation. O'Toole in response to this, sees the value of being able to: "…listen carefully to their (the participants) own accounts, observe their behaviour, and make informed inferences. Education is a lifelong process, where students continue to learn and make connections themselves." (*ibid*: 43). In Cooling Conflict 'anecdotal' evidence was the primary data used to ascertain the outcomes from the project. Necessarily with qualitative data there are always questions that need to be asked:

> The overwhelming anecdotal evidence of students and teachers confirms that valuable, usable learning happens... However, the question can justifiably be raised as to the extent to which these gains are a result of the program, and how accurately this can be measured. Moreover, how do we gauge students' understanding of the principles of conflict as they apply not just to familiar situations, as family members and friends, but also as citizens on a national and global level? Drama scholars like Steve Cockett (1998) question how we can know for sure the effect of discoveries facilitated through drama, and points out 'even Boal admits there is no proper instrument for measuring the effectiveness of his techniques'. (*ibid*: 42).

O'Toole, viewing the difficulties of capturing the effects of applied drama work, asserts:

> The relationship between students, learning and empowerment is very complex, as splendidly uncertain as drama itself. As the researchers grappled with these issues, we frequently envisaged the ripple effect upon water's surface of a stone thrown in a pool. The ripple cannot be measured, nor can all its effects above and beneath the water be calculated; yet it patently exists. (*ibid*: 43).

The notion of the 'splendidly uncertain' nature of drama and the metaphor of the 'ripple effect' is useful when contemplating a longitudinal approach to evaluating Applied Drama work. With the Penwithen Project it was like a heavy stone being thrown into the pool of their life experience. It highlights for me that drama is so encompassing and deeply woven into the human existence that its richness can never fully be appreciated. Most applied facilitators have many wonderful anecdotal stories of people they have bumped into years later, who have shared a profound shift in their lives because of being part of a project. My 'chestnut' story comes out of Vita Nova taking *Scatchin' the Surface*, the same play that the

Penwithen boys saw, into Guys Marsh Prison. We were performing on the wing of the prison, not in the gym as I had envisaged, with lots of clanging doors and everyone sitting in grey. Never before had I felt so awkward and a bit middle class introducing the play: "*Hi this is Sharon we have a play we want to share.*" There were a few heckles and then we performed the play and the after-show talk. About five years later a man walked into the studio in the BCCA whilst I was rehearsing *It's About Time* with Vita Nova. The stranger said he would like to join the group. I asked how he heard of us. He replied it was in the prison and he had kept it in his mind. He stayed with the group for over a year. An example of an alternative anecdotal story is when Vita Nova performed *The Nest* [24]for a group of vulnerable post-sixteen students, described by their tutor as having: "Learning needs, challenging behaviours or mental health issues." At the end I looked at one girl, a little over-weight with lots of make-up and startling blue eyes. "*Don't I know you?*" I said. "*Yes*," she replied. "*Ah, I used to work with you, before didn't I*?" Then I remembered a journey of working with Courtney. Firstly, in a 'nurture' group at a primary school, later after she had been removed from mainstream and put into a special school. She always enjoyed drama. We did a project based around Harry Potter and she had played *Hermione Granger* which she very much enjoyed. Transformative, is a word that is used a great deal when assessing applied drama work; one I also find myself using to describe its effect. But it wasn't transformative enough to rescue Courtney from still dwelling among the 'marginalised'. However, she was able to engage with me. We had shared experiences. She was happy to see me. I was happy to see her …but not there…not there. What was uplifting however, about the group of young people that she was with, was that they became protective of Vita Nova. Even though they were a great deal older than themselves, they could identify with them. From their evaluation forms:

> Just want to say a massive respect to all of you. It really made me think about things. You should all be filled with so much pride …Thank you so much!
> (Audience member)
>
> You should all be very proud of the men you have become. You are a huge inspiration to all of us and we respect you so much!
> (Audience member)
>
> Lots of respect and you are very good actors and even braver for talking about such a sensitive subject. From your friend.
> (Audience member)

[24] The Nest a one-act play by Sharon Coyne that deals with the point someone decides to stop using drugs and alcohol.

In the unreality of a drama space is where transformation on some level is possible. That transformation may be a moment, an indication or a glimmer of latent potential. I certainly had seen that glimmer from the much younger Courtney. Surely, if people can do well in the drama space, they can do well outside of it? But if that outside space, their reality, is so dysfunctional, so difficult, it may take a long time and sadly for some, their potential may never flower. I want to re-affirm the great possibility of integration through drama. Separation within our society causes so many imbalances. There is proof that such societal differences can be set aside, that real dialogue can take place between all kinds of people within the drama context. Importantly, as the 'Being Other' report states so clearly, this kind of intervention can only happen "through high quality professionally led creative projects," (Tawell *et al.,* 2015: 23) to enable what Paul Willis describes: "…*profane* creativity shows us the only route for radical cultural change." (Willis, 1978:1)

'Cooling Conflict' is described as developing: "*over several years 'through listening to the students and their responses'. The project operated on* the 'basic premise' that 'effective conflict management is dependent on conflict understanding.'" (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 41). Although there were various levels of success in response to the project, it is recorded that "Virtually every student ended up able to identify and define the three stages of conflict – latent, emergent and manifest." *(ibid*: 41). Through revisiting participants after a year, researchers discovered that not only were the three stages of conflict remembered but some participants had a cognitive grasp and were able to apply them. What is not unsurprising for those who work in the field is the wider impact exuding from the drama intervention. Positive benefits gained by students were noted as going beyond comprehending levels of conflict:

> In fact, one student, who had been very disillusioned with school, claimed that if it wasn't for the connection she made to the program: "*I would have been out of here by now."* (*ibid*: 43)

The outcomes were very positive, displaying that through drama the three stages of conflict were comprehended and employed in everyday life, along with the beginnings of a discernment of the human condition. DICE encapsulates this aspect in its additional Key Competence for drama: "*The universal competence of what it is to be human*." (DICE 2010: 6). One student in 'Cooling Conflict' reflected:

> Conflict isn't always a bad thing… the manifest stage just clearly displays that people can't always hold things in…conflict happening brings you closer once more to the

> person. You realise that once you have gone through that you can still maintain a friendship. (O'Toole, 2004: 51)

This quote has resonance with the work undertaken with Vita Nova. Through sharing their play *Scratchin' the Surface* the audience, besides learning about drug and alcohol misuse, also heard the message that life is not straightforward and clear cut as there are lots of 'grey and messy areas'. The young people involved with 'Cooling Conflict' gained some insight that conflict is an aspect of life and it is how we deal with difficult situations that is important. In fact, it's part of becoming a rounded and compassionate human being. "*The outcome hinges upon how individuals respond to conflict, and in particular, their ability to consider perspectives other than their own*." (*ibid*: 51). The notion of 'empathy' also comes through in 'Cooling Conflict': "*Many students spoke of better and more empathic relationships with their teachers; a direct result of having been placed in their shoes*." (*ibid*: 44). This is a frequent outcome from applied projects. Additionally, there is the recognition that drama can impact on behaviours outside of school. In my view this is a strong recommendation for drama being placed in all educational settings and particularly in places where young people have been taken out of mainstream education. The impact of behavioural change was apparent within all aspects of some of the participants' lives, such as a year 11 student who stated:

> I've started to define conflict better for myself at home and in school. I can see something happening and say 'hey, that's a latent conflict – look out' or 'we're into a manifest conflict – better butt out of this.'' (*ibid*: 44).

Another recurring theme that emerges from 'Cooling Conflict' is the socialisation element of drama that emerged: "Across all schools as a direct result of the peer teaching." (*ibid*: 48). In the instance of the Penwithen Boys, although coming from the same school, they were a disparate group. Added to this was the inclusion of 'work experience' Darren who was unknown to them all. The project united them. Nick recalls 17 years on that they began as: "Seven separate people," but after a period of time, they were returning to school: "As a seven unit." (Burton,N: 2019). Tracey expressed her enjoyment at:

> Working with other people from the group and getting to know them more and working with older people and younger and teaching the skills we had learnt. (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 53).

Dan went even further within his interview. When looking back on the drama experience, he described their coming together as a "Brotherhood." (Stanaway: 2018). Within the DICE report the opportunities for developing empathy through drama are outlined as:

> …a framed activity where role-taking allows the participants to think or/and behave as if they were in a different context and to respond as if they were involved in a different set of historical, social and interpersonal relationships. This is the source of dramatic tension. In drama we imagine the real in order to explore the human condition. (DICE 2010:15).

DICE's findings demonstrated that drama has a universal quality to stimulate imaginations and bring people together: "... to encourage personal and social transformations and to give their students a sense of power, responsibility and ownership within the work." *(ibid*: 73).

The socializing benefits of drama interconnect with individuals' ability to empathise with each other. A significant outcome within 'Cooling Conflict' was the aspect of socialisation: "*Many students claim to have a clearer understanding of cultural conflict. The work undertaken broke down barriers with one school in rural NSW, with a history of tension and disharmony in the community recording and increased level of cultural harmony.*" (O'Toole *et al.* 2004: 49). The opportunity for exposure to different life experiences that arose through the Penwithen project resulted in Nick, who had used racist language in rehearsals in the UK, when confronted in Latvia with young people from different countries and my son Muiruri, then five years old and of dual heritage, having a profound effect on him. All the boys were kind and playful with Muiruri but it was Nick who was completely enthralled to the extent that, on the last evening of our stay in Latvia, he asked the coach driver to wait when it came to Muiruri and myself being dropped off. He did this in order to carry the sleeping infant upstairs, as he didn't want to wake him. I can still see him carefully lying him down on the bed. This is not innovative, gained only from 'acting out' but the bringing together of people who would not normally meet. It was the opportunity of people coming together through the peer led work in 'Cooling Conflict' that contributed to the transformation of some of the students.

The 'Cooling Conflict 'project identifies a 'principle' that I have also tried to adhere to within my own practice, particularly when working with both Vita Nova and Penwithen, that the universal core stories of participants become fictionalised. The fictionalisation of Penwithen narratives is an area I discuss in *Chapter 4*. This action was to achieve a healthy and

protective distance between audience and actors. Participants in the Penwithen project in common with 'Cooling Conflict' brought "*Their own cultural agendas into the drama work*." (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 50). In so doing there arose the possibility of gaining some level of insight into their situations, sometimes benevolently, sometimes more ambivalently.
O'Toole expresses clearly that:

> One consistent principle related to the oblique way dramatic learning operates is that the conflicts explored can arise directly or indirectly from the students' experience and ideas. However, these issues are deliberately not privileged, but fictionalised and then dealt with as they emerge, as part of the 'natural order of conflict." (ibid:50).

O'Toole further explains when discussing a 'phenomenon [that] occurred during a *Theatre-In-Education* project: "That in situations when participants experience fear of disclosure that 'interactive drama helps them to overcome their fear of disclosure, by exploiting the protection of role that forum theatre provides." (*ibid*: 50).
Significantly he states:

> It is through the creation of one's own fictional world that we are able to understand and change the real one. This process occurs both as a requirement and a result of identifying with a particular role. (*ibid*: 50).

O'Toole reminds us of the notion that is often associated with Brecht, that, for some students, the experience of theatre-in-education becomes a 'rehearsal for life'. It certainly was for Penwithen.

Although formal Forum Theatre didn't take place on the level it occurred in 'Cooling Conflict', an impromptu configuration of Forum took place within the studio as we explored, and reworked, and adapted their stories. For example, the 'Shop Lifting' scene from their play, emerged not only through working with the boys' narratives but via discovering methods of fictionalising and stylising, in order to protect the individuals who had disclosed information about their pasts. I give a fuller account of this in *Chapter 4* p131. The exploration of life stories within an assured environment is for the participant often revolutionary. Drama has the ability to offer profound insights about people's pasts.
This realisation became clear to me back in 1999 when working with Vita Nova.
Whilst creating what was to become *Scratchin' the Surface,* we acted out elements we wanted to include in the play. This activity of exploring different scenes was a very intense and communal exercise. A dynamic form of forum emerged where we would act out ideas

and then members would add details or ideas until there was a universal acceptance of what was incorporated into that particular scene. One area we had decided as a group that needed to be included was a scene involving theft. This had echoes of Penwithen's requirement of an illegal shoplifting scene. Stealing, as for most people with a habit becomes an almost necessary part of their existence to obtain money to feed their disease. It was while Vita Nova were working on what we dubbed the 'break- in scene' that one of our participants who was observing and vocally contributing had a significant insight about her past story. Before the acting out activity, she had remembered her past completely around her own perceptions. I have included an excerpt from my MPhil that demonstrates this situation and possibility for applied drama work:

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>
> The scene then flowed easily from the group who collaborated on getting the language just right; Jay's excuses for breaking into his Dad's place came effortlessly "I didn't put the lights on because I didn't want to wake you."
> A couple of members found the scene really disturbing as the improvisations allowed them to see the whole picture, the effect not just on the them but also on the parent.
> The acting out of the break-in scene was a transforming experience for Elin.
> She was able to look again at events she had logged in her memory as not being so important.
> I thought because my parents were a long way away that they were in some way shielded from the pain … but I realise now some of what they felt. (group interview Elin, VN, 5.4.00)
> Elin had gone through a process of normalising situations, making things alright for herself - which is a form of denial. Seeing the break-in scene allowed her to see the pain of the parent. Even if a parent gets to the point where they ask a child to leave, they will rarely be at ease with the separation. In an interview shortly after making the play Elin said:
> "…actually, things I made small in my own mind like stealing money from my Mum, that had been put aside for me; I'd made that really small. The parent thing - what the break-in scene has done has brought to light things I had made small but they weren't. Stealing tablets from the cupboard, alcohol; it got to the point Mum didn't keep any alcohol in the house because of me."
> (group interview Elin, VN, 5.4.00) (Coyne, 2007:149)

The attention to the unseen, the emotional is fundamental in drama work. One student in 'Cooling Conflict' stated: "With drama, you can actually express your feelings." (O'Toole *et al.* 2004: 50). Whereas, 'Tracey' is described as having: "An increasing awareness of self, not just as a leader, but in overall behaviour as well." (*ibid*: 53). Once again, this response interconnects with aspects that have already been noted; a rise in self-worth and the development of empathy. There is also a refreshing honesty in the disclosure that early work

with Tracey did not always result in her shifting her old behaviour. Drama is not a panacea for all social ills. Boal's use of the Joker within Forum Theatre is there to check for 'magic'. "Watch out for magic solutions. The joker may interpret the spectator's action if they consider an action to be magic." (MacDonald & Rachel, 2000). Often unrealistic expectations are aligned to applied drama. Alchemy defiantly occurs within the drama context, but it cannot conjure away deep social injustice. There were, however, very positive shifts that showed that the process of change was transpiring:

> Tracey's attempts to remain calm and rational, to think before she acted, were reflective of her desire to maintain the profound effects the program has had on all areas of her life. This includes her growing confidence and self-esteem, the positive experience school has become and her improved relations with teachers, friends and family members. (*ibid*: 54).

In the world of recovery from drug and alcohol abuse the acknowledgment you have a problem is the first step towards recovery. Although not completely able to avoid conflict situations, Tracey is beginning to employ positive strategies learnt through the drama element of the project: "S*uch as taking deep breaths."* Importantly, Tracey said: "*I stop and think of my consequences, then I do what I think is right."* (*ibid*: 54).
Tracey's progress was noticed by her mother and friends and was having positive effects beyond school.

An area that is often under-recorded is the notion of drama enabling individuals to have respite from their situations. All three boys interviewed from Penwithen 2018 &19 recalled the relaxation exercise in 2002 as a positive outcome of the project. Darren talked about loving the "peace and quiet." he found through the relaxation talk-throughs I used to run most sessions with the lads:
Often, I have heard the phrase when working with groups that the session has given them a 'break from their heads.' Tracey describes the effects of the work in Cooling Conflict:

> Drama takes away your feelings too…you forget about a lot of things and you have a lot of fun in there...the other day I came in depressed for some reason. And when I was doing my skits and that, I just forgot all about my depression and just let this other character take control inside of me. (*ibid*: 54).

The significance of ownership and relevant material is vital for groups, especially those who are excluded or marginalised. Tracey's engagement with 'Cooling Conflict', as with the Penwithen Boys and the participants involved with the various projects cited in 'Being

Other', were successful because the young people were interested in the subject areas. They were dealing with struggles they knew about and were experts in. In other words, the subject areas were relevant and engaging. The connection the boys had with the subject in the Penwithen project meant that even the quietest of young people began to open out and express themselves. Tracey's mother saw vast improvements in her daughter's behaviour. Perceptively she said:

> …a taste of theatre and the power of it and I think they're interested in it. It wasn't just Drama, it was because the social action content of it was relevant to them. (*ibid:* 57).

Tracey's mother along with teachers and friends embraced her change of outlook.

> Cooling Conflict facilitated within Tracey a transformation so profound that it completely altered her status as a troublemaker in the school. This negative persona was transcended by the emergence of a girl not only better equipped to handle her conflict situations, but also her relationships with others." *(ibid*: 59).

In my experience, not everyone is so celebratory of change through drama work. Breaking patterns of behaviour goes both ways; not only for the person who needs to take responsibility but for those around them, who have decided that the individual is 'deviant'. Often it is difficult to shift people's judgments especially when trust has been broken. In some situations, the narrative of the 'black sheep' feeds individuals or, in some instances, institutions their positions of power.

Empathy is a central aspect of the projects I have reviewed. DICE, within its pedagogical credo sets out that "Openness, empathy and responsibility are the fundamentals of active citizenship, pluralism, solidarity and civil dialogue." (DICE 2010: 13). It further states that young people should gain these qualities through:

> …the art form of theatre and drama, and through dramatic role-play and stories in which the pupils become actively engaged in exploratory investigation of moral, social or curriculum contents and what it means to be human in a contemporary world." *(ibid*: 13).

These words have gravitas. They speak of the fundamental qualities for an equal society and, DICE is suggesting that it is through drama that such ideals may be achieved. 'Cooling Conflict' also affirms: "*The ability to empathise is a key component of drama*." (O'Toole *et al.* 2004: 57). It illustrates that Tracey's involvement in both forum theatre and peer teaching

assisted her in comprehending conflict situations, not just in school but in a whole range of circumstances. I return to Dan's words from Penwithen, who spoke about the effect of the project on them as a group. The trust that had been fostered between them in the drama group enabled them to support each other in conflict situations outside of the workshops:

> …if I saw Nick was having a hard time I would go and talk to him we had a chat …Instead of blowing our tops we could diffuse situations a bit better because we both knew a little bit about each other you know what I mean. (Stanaway: 2018)

What was going on for these young people was that they were experiencing each other's stories via the drama work. Consequently, they began to trust and empathise with each other. Importantly, Tracey felt of use. Her acquired leadership skills led to her not only building confidence but "*Feeling needed, appreciated and useful.*" (O'Toole *et al.* 2004: 57). Tracey and the lads were not just making a play that interested them, their work was for a reason. The four boys, now men that I interviewed repeated a sense of deep pride in their achievement.

Many young people, especially those who are marginalised, in the shadows, experience a sense of worthlessness. Tracey also experienced 'feelings of shame'. Shame is a particularly toxic emotion and is experienced acutely by a great deal of addicts. So much so that in Vita Nova's play *The Nest*, one of the voices in the protagonist Sam's head, is called 'Shame'. Therapist Darlene Lancer explains:

> Shame is so painful to the psyche that most people will do anything to avoid it, even though it's a natural emotion that everyone has. It's a physiologic response of the autonomic nervous system. You might blush, have a rapid heartbeat, break into a sweat, freeze, hang your head, slump your shoulders, avoid eye contact, withdraw, even get dizzy or nauseous. (Lancer: 2018).

I witnessed a lot of the body language mentioned in this quote by the Penwithen Boys; not so much from the noisy out-going ones, but from the very quiet boys, Kieran, Nathan and Bradley who had to be coaxed to speak. Lancer goes on to explain the reasons for shame being such a potent emotion:

> Whereas guilt is a right or wrong judgment about your behavior, shame is a feeling about yourself. Guilt motivates you to want to correct or repair the error. In contrast, shame is an intense global feeling of inadequacy, inferiority, or self-loathing (Lancer: 2018).

With the notion of purposefulness comes an important opportunity for those who feel they have nothing to give…that is to be altruistic. This was a significant outcome in the research I carried out with Vita Nova:

> …the altruistic side of the project was deeply important for the group. Wanting to 'give something back' was something I heard over and over. Listening to the group I learnt how, driven by addiction, they had for periods of time lost their humanity. You break your own morals in desperation. You don't care about anything except the next fix. (VN Member 1.4.99) (Coyne, 2002).

Where social break-down is clear, so the creation of the group–community is vital. Altruism is explicitly linked to empathy. The development of empathy coupled with the element of socialisation as drama outcomes, can have a dynamic impact on participants. The creation of groups through the common endeavour of making a piece of drama or theatre that then leads to a sense of achievement is powerful.

Psychologist Tom Farsides notes:

> Contrary to Margaret Thatcher's infamous dictum, there is such a thing as society. Moreover, as citizens and as psychologists we have an option and perhaps a responsibility to decide what sort of society we want. One possibility is to try to promote a truly civil society, one in which people have a tendency to be altruistic – to act on concerns for others' welfare as well as their own. In such a society, everyone would benefit from giving as well as from receiving care and consideration (Post, 2005). Were such a goal adopted, psychology would have much to contribute. (Farsides: 2007).

The models of society that are created through drama projects are often the result of bringing together alienated, dislocated, fragmented and often lonely individuals. To form a group, often called a 'family', that can be productive creatively and also benefit the wider community, is of huge importance. Certainly, Vita Nova did and does still thrive on giving as well as receiving. The Penwithen Boys found their gift of courage in performing their play, reaped rich rewards, such as dignity, confidence and, of course, a trip to Latvia. For Tracey her gains from giving were immense in terms of self-esteem. Farsides clarifies the link between empathy and altruism:

> The greater people's ability to empathise, the greater their potential to be altruistic. Social skills training that improves people's empathising abilities (Stepien & Baernstein, 2006) therefore also tends to improve their ability to be altruistic. (Farsides: 2007).

The notion of increased empathy allowing for more altruistic activity was certainly clearly proven in both drama projects. Teachers described Tracey's contribution to Cooling Conflict' *"She was really good with the kids and I think she helped everyone boost their confidence"* (O'Toole *et al*. 2004: 53). Tracey had become a 'wounded healer' as, to an extent, the boys did; a young woman with low self-esteem supporting others in building their confidence. Farsides concludes his article by quoting Forni:

> I am optimistic about our ability to better ourselves. We can learn to be decent and caring; we can learn to give of ourselves; we can learn to love. How do we do that? The same way we learn how to speak, read, swim, or ride a bicycle: we need somebody to teach us, and we need practice. (Forni, 2002: 19).

This quote has great significance for applied drama. With strong teachers/facilitators we can learn, practice empathy through drama. We can break patterns and offer different ways of being. Since I began writing this chapter, we have a change of Prime Minster in Boris Johnson. In 2005 in an opinion piece for the *Daily Telegraph,* Johnson is quoted as saying in reference to the poorest 20 per cent of society, that they are made up of: "Chavs, losers, burglars and drug addicts."
Ken Loach's recent film *Sorry we Missed you* (2019) looks at how those on zero hours contracts are almost in servitude**.** The film critic Peter Bradshaw comments:

> But I can only say that the European Union is the modern-day nursery of employment rights, and outside it is where working people will find more cynicism, more cruelty, more exploitation, more economic isolation and more poverty. This brilliant film will focus minds. (Bradshaw, 2019).

I bring these issues to mind as a constant reminder that while we can make huge strides in changing thinking through applied drama interventions, we will always be limited in our efforts. Difficult social environments and a dismissive top-down attitude to those who are on the margins, continually feeds a sense of isolation and disempowerment. And whilst we faithfully keep the applied drama banner waving, a radical political change is needed to address deep social injustice. But, like Ken Loach, we can at least keep the awareness of some people's plight alive. At the same time, as drama facilitators, we can, in some small way, offer a sense of hope and unity.

Chapter Four: Location and Uncharted Territory: Case Study

> It's clear that Billy stands for a whole generation of youngsters whose potential, barring some such chance event, will never be even fractionally realised.
> (Review: Ken Loach's Ke**s**)

Was the Penwithen drama project that chance event?

4.1 Context

Within the Applied Drama world, the significance of process, action and reflection within the workshops or rehearsals has long been acknowledged as a fundamental factor in the discipline. Nicholson, when discussing the notion of praxis in relation to applied drama quotes Lather:

> Applied to drama, praxis does not denote a linear model of learning, but a cyclical process in which practice generates new insights and where, reciprocally, theoretical ideals are interrogated, created and embodied in practice. Praxis, therefore, is built on a circularity of thought, feeling and action. (Nicholson, 2009: 39)

Within this case study, the end-goal drove the beginning; but the journey of creation was as meaningful as the deliverance of the Penwithen Boys' play '*Til It All Went Wrong*. This is a narrative that is well known within applied drama practice. However, my motivation in this research is to examine the quality of the interventions and the long-term legacy for the participants. This study is a series of cultural interventions. Firstly, the Penwithen Boys watching a community theatre group, Vita Nova, perform a play at their school; secondly, a group of boys from Penwithen being selected and driven to Boscombe every week for regular drama sessions; thirdly, performing their plays in an assortment of venues, and finally, flying to Riga to participate and perform in a cultural arts festival, The Baltic Bell Festival of Love (2002). The boys' play became a pathway to work in different locations and meet a wide variety of people. I hope to discover if these opportunities gave the group the possibility to reassess their place in the world. The entire project enabled the participants to enter into a series of conversations with a whole range of people and consequently, at some level, have an internal dialogue with themselves. The access that opened up for those boys in meeting others cannot be under-estimated. Previously, the Penwithen Boys' experience of encountering different people had been limited. Even though on one hand they were very

worldly, in a streetwise fashion, on the other they were culturally stunted. Freire sees dialogue as a necessity for people to become fully human:

> Dialogue with the people is neither a concession nor a gift, much less a tactic to be used for domination. Dialogue, as the encounter among men to 'name' the world, is a fundamental precondition for their true humanization. (Freire, 1970:118)

The boys were limited in their engagement with others verbally and in their ability to move into spaces that seemed unobtainable. Previous to the project the people and places they encountered, such as universities, engaging with the police, The British Council, head teachers; going to the prestigious 'Mazza Gilde' Riga, let alone sitting in a classical theatre listening to Chekhov in Russian, even if it was because they fancied the girls who were performing, were completely out of their reach.

The trip to Latvia places this particular case study into another dimension of understanding. This model enables us to look not just at the behaviour of the boys, but the differences that occurred when people behaved differently towards them; the impact that alternative expectations can have on young people's attitudes. This case study moves from the chaotic, narrow worlds that most of the boys from Penwithen inhabited to being placed in a heterotopian environment, the Baltic Festival of Love. It challenges approaches to learning and looks beyond the experience of the young lads to how society deals with people who are marginalised.

The journey to Latvia highlights the observations of Prentki and Pammenter:

> In the therapeutic model the problem is located with the participant who willfully acts against her own interest. The system is never to blame and so the system is never challenged, still less changed. (Prentki & Pammenter, 2014:4)

They go on to point out the possible limitations of applied projects and the importance of the facilitator in being clear on his or her intensions:

> …if this approach to personal change is divorced from its broader, social implications, it is likely to result in the individual being contained within an unchanged, oppressive and violent social construction. The participant feels better for having enjoyed the communal pleasures of a well-conducted workshop process, … … but rather than changing anything, we have merely been supporting the participant in making the best of life within a failed system. The facilitator of personal change through theatre must, therefore, be very clear about her intentions for the process and its limitations. (*ibid*: 4)

As a facilitator I confess that my intentions were not then so politically articulate as this statement implies. However, I suggest that this case study moves beyond personal change, to an extent that a level of exterior change occurred when we took their play on the road and talked to people about the real problems addressed within their piece. I hope to demonstrate that in this particular enterprise, through applied drama, 'conscientization' occurred. This case study sets out to test if the personal change that took place in 2001/2 has lasted beyond the project. In the subsequent 'Interviews', over 17 years later, there will be an attempt to evidence whether the personal shifts that transpired back then have had an enduring effect. (*See Chapter 5*)

Throughout the Penwithen project, with its focus on the use of applied drama with its dynamic problem-solving qualities, I can test Freire's assertion:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world, with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire, 1970: 64)

I have in this chapter woven in strands from other projects that have affected my practice. Alongside the significant role of the Vita Nova (1999) project I will also reflect on Give us a Voice (2001) and more recently the Pilsdon Project (2018).
In order to structure this extended piece of work with all its tangents, I have decided to focus on the intervention of Vita Nova via a theatre visit to Penwithen and the process of the boys then creating their own play, which I have named Part One. The following Part Two, will analyse the Latvian theatre visit and conclusions drawn up at the time of the project in 2001/2 with added current thoughts and responses to the work. This separation also allows for a reflection on ideas mooted by Prentki and Pammenter. In particular, when discussing applied theatre projects, they refer to Brecht:

> The importance of theatre as a means of stimulating personal, social and political change is that it can be used to create a space in which changes can be rehearsed and analysed, provided that the starting point for the devising process is real: personally real, socially real, and politically real in line with Brecht's dictum that 'taught only by reality, can reality be changed'
> (Brecht, 1977:34). (Prentki & Pammenter, 2014: 2)

In their article *Living beyond our means: meaning beyond our lives. Theatre as Education for Change* Prentki & Pammenter focus on three key themes:

'theatre as personal change', 'theatre as social change' and 'theatre as political change'. These headings are useful and feed into an emerging spiral of activity, where applied theatre, following the principles of Theatre for Development, i.e. - where the facilitator works *in situ* then invites the group to create a play that tells their story and that play then becomes a platform, a starting point for dialogue with the community. The first part of the case study takes into account the possibilities of personal and social change, whereas the second part is focused on the move to Latvia and highlights the possibility of political change. These themes are not clearly discrete within these two sections as there is inevitably overlap. I make particular reference to my report, *Son of Vita Nova* 2002, which I refer to as Report 1 that was based around my field notes and journal. I reiterate here before going into detail of the case study that the project happened over 19 years ago. The whole notion of memory has to be taken into account. When revisiting the past, the context of that specific period that the boys inhabited must be taken into consideration. Tony Blair was then Prime Minister, mobiles were there but the boys were still listening to cassettes and MP3 players: rap artist, Eminem's *Lose Yourself* was the most popular song in 2002 and featured in our play '*Til It All Went Wrong*.

I as writer was also a participant. Keeping these particular points in mind is important in trying to evaluate as carefully as possible, whilst attempting to make sense of the impact of the project, and how it may have implications in other applied drama work.

4.1.2 Authentic

The use of the word authentic within this thesis needs clarification, as it is a word I use repeatedly. This is partly due to the fact that over the years a frequent comment from audiences watching the applied work I have been involved in has been: "*It works because its authentic*." The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word authentic as: "If something is authentic, it is real, true, or what people say it is."

In the case of the projects I discuss within this dissertation - primarily being Penwithen, Vita Nova but also referring to the work undertaken with other communities such as Refugees, Pilsdon, and Gypsies and Travellers, I see them as all being 'authentic', in as much as their stories were made by and performed by that particular group. The work I am engaged with is not only devised with the group but they become the actors within their play. When post-play discussions occur, which was the case for Vita Nova and Penwithen, those participants talk about their own life experiences leading out of the play that the audience witnessed.

With the Ghost Gypsy Traveller project *(see 1.3.15 p57) Kushti- Bok* [25] were quite rightly absolutely adamant that their community should play Gypsy/Traveller roles because it was their story. Director Alessandra Davison makes this point clearly when discussing in *The Stage* how the film and stage industry should take more responsibility for accurately telling Gypsy, Roma and Traveller stories: "*Sometimes the burden is on the misrepresented community to explain their culture rather than giving them space to tell their own story."* (Snow, 2020: The Stage). I think this quote is applicable to many marginalised groups. Ackroyd and O'Toole's *Performing Research* cites a particular project where the contributors' words were spoken by actors:

> The professional actors performing the monologues do not convey the hurt that the research participants expressed. They did not hear the real voices and are perhaps outside the experience. The stories are shocking. The script is there but this presentation has not honoured the narratives of those participants. Madison's point that we must be accountable for the consequences of our representations and the implications of messages is crucial: every detail is relevant to the expression of a real person's story." (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010: 47)

I can identify with this after witnessing the power of the people who have made and then delivered their work. I know that actors could perform the plays and that they would probably know their lines perfectly and project clearly, but it would be a different experience. It is hard to describe but there is a weight that the performers give to something that is not just an acting role but has deep meaning for them. It becomes something that they are not just doing for themselves or the group but for their communities. They have taken on the mantle of telling their story to the wider public about how life is for them. I have observed repeatedly that post- show discussions are rich because the performers truly know what it is to be an addict or refugee or a teenager who is lost. I am still working in this way as I have not seen a more effective way of creating dialogue between participant actors and the audience. Just last week a group of hard-to-reach teenagers watched Vita Nova's *The Nest* [26]. The post-show discussion was from the heart. One young lad said how emotional it had made him feel. This was an example of what I consider to be authentic theatre. An honesty, a vulnerability and a willingness to stand in front of an audience and tell your story. A story that is not only 'yours' but of the recovering community.

[25] Dorset based organisation Kushti- Bok : 'We at Kushti Bok are dedicated too spreading awareness about race equality .http://kushtibokdorset.co.uk/

[26] 'The Nest 'by Sharon Coyne performed for the youth service on 15.10.19

However, the question of authenticity is not so straight forward when looking at the content of the work that is being delivered. The scripts are not verbatim; some phrases or words may be woven in but the stories come out of 'truths', the experiences that groups have shared. Again, the word 'truth' is problematic as it depends on whose truth. So, the participants are real in as much as they are young offenders or adults in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse, refugees or Wayfarers but the plays are based on their collective stories.
Ackroyd and O'Toole, who examine the notion of authenticity in their investigation of ethnodrama within their analysis of selected case studies, quote two of their contributors Robinson and Linden saying:

> …having constructed the script almost entirely from verbatim data, it was still 'a creative act to put together the words of participants in the form that I choose'. But she asks 'can fiction be said to represent reality of experience?' She refers to the problem of the 'tensions between what is real and what is fictional in script.' Linden grapples with these issues in relation to live performance and pretend, noting that if one can accept that performances by nature are artificial, one can perhaps allow for degrees of authenticity. *(ibid*: 50)

I am not working from exactly the same basis as the case studies in their book. For myself as a facilitator, it is not an issue for me having the role of making aesthetic decisions. I choose what goes into the piece …the pulling together, shaping, blending and mixing ideas into a story that becomes a script that then becomes theatre. I feel that is the expertise that I have as a drama facilitator. It is what I can offer groups. I am the magician. Sometimes the material is so vast and the time often limited, that without giving form or direction the play would in some cases never happen. The beauty of being inside the work but also outside is that I can contribute a different perspective. The group are the experts with all the knowledge. As drama practitioner I am the enabler. I am not in recovery; I am not a refugee. I am not a young offender but I am someone who can use my skills to work with different groups and seek the essence of what they are trying to tell me; what they are trying to make sense of. Often, I will be trying to discover universal truths. 'I choose' is not the positioning of a dominant didactic force but of a negotiator, engineer and artist.

I am working with truths from the group but with the understanding that nothing is absolutely true, as everything is dependent on circumstance. Paulo Freire looked for what was 'real'. (Freire, 1970: 94)

I try to aspire to that premise with each group I work with. I cannot really find myself working on anything that isn't looking for some form of authenticity. What was real for the Penwithen Boys was that they were disaffected and forgotten by society.

> Freire's political pedagogy takes account of personal feelings as well as the material circumstances, and it is partly his emphasis on the 'real' that has resonated with drama practitioners working with marginalise groups across the world. (Nicholson, 2005: 42)

I find the artificiality of theatre useful. The story allows people to have some kind of protection; a distance so that they can speak their truths through the fiction. I feel there is a responsibility to protect the tellers by reshaping their stories and using the language of theatre, in as strong a way as possible without exploiting them or in any way presenting them as outsiders. They may have felt estranged but the theatre is a vehicle to finding your place, your voice and your agency within society.

I think verbatim theatre is powerful and has a place within contemporary theatre. However, for the work I deliver the power of the fiction, the story-making is in many cases what holds or creates the group. With the Travellers' project it was not until they read the working-script of *Ghost Gypsy*, written after talking to many people and researching their plight, that they began to engage with the project. The play gave a structure to convey their truths. With Vita Nova's *Scratchin' the Surface* it was the use of the symbolic representation of 'Raven' to portray the disease of addiction. For the Penwithen Boys it was pulling their ideas together into a very basic working-script that made it possible for them to imagine that their play could become a reality; a solid frame for them to develop further what they wanted to say.

Part One the Penwithen Boys Dorset. (2001/2)

4.2: The intervention of Vita Nova.

A sequence of events led to the Penwithen project. The most significant being Vita Nova bringing their play *Scratchin' the Surface* to Penwithen 2001. Vita Nova needs to be firmly included within this case study as their visit formed the stepping-stone towards Penwithen's involvement with drama. In fact, none of this enterprise would have occurred without their intervention. *Scratchin' the Surface* is a play about a young man called 'Jay' and his entry into drug addiction, being portrayed by the character of 'Raven'. 'Raven' follows 'Jay' around at first lifting him 'high'. This was physically depicted in the play with the actor playing 'Raven' holding 'Jay' up. As the drugs increasingly have a destructive effect on 'Jay' so 'Raven' becomes a burden, to the extent that at the end of the play 'Jay' has to drag 'Raven' across the stage. This theatrical visualization of the inner voice of addiction was clear to see and therefore could be discussed and talked about. What is that negative voice constantly shaming and denigrating us? The play emerged through my working very closely with Vita Nova as their facilitator and finding a frame for their stories. The performance at Penwithen, as with all performances of *Scratchin' the Surface* was followed by questions from the audience. They could ask anything they wanted. The play spoke to the boys. A dialogue between the pupils and Vita Nova began, one of recognition on both sides. The boys instinctively knew the group was authentic and some of the actors could see their younger selves within the audience. There was a mutual understanding of what it meant to be an outsider. As Freire states: "…*only through communication can human life hold meaning*." (Freire, 1970: 58)

(Appendix 9 extract from 'An Excluded Community' recounts the emergence of Vita Nova).

Vita Nova had an impact on Penwithen, and my own emerging role as a facilitator with groups who are outside of the mainstream or to use Eugene van Erven's word: "*Peripheral*" (van Erven, 2001:2). Prentki reminds us of the necessity of the facilitator requiring:

> …a particular set of knowledge … …this type of facilitator may be a theatre professional, a teacher, a NGO GOG worker, even, God help us, an academic. What is important is that this person is committed to using theatre as a site for an encounter between the participant and the wider social world inhabited by that participant with all its history and contradictions laid bare.
> (Prentki & Pammenter, 2014: 4)

With both the Vita Nova and Penwithen project I tried to make a bridge from their 'worlds' to so-called society. I described, when referring to Vita Nova, the participants inhabiting a 'shadow-land', but equally could have said this of the Penwithen Boys. The bridge was through the plays; their story performed to the wider community. A possibility of connecting, talking to each other, therefore changing society's perspectives and stereotypes as to who, in Vita Nova's case, was an addict and with Penwithen who was an excluded teenager.

The metaphor of the 'shadow-land' I proposed for Vita Nova I view as a form of oppression inflicted on them by society and then internalised by themselves. The group had digested a myth that they were isolated from society, reinforced by the fact that finding work after rehab, prison or just trying to get to a level where you feel well enough to work is prohibitive. Their overriding view was that the 'shadow-land' they inhabited was where they were expected and destined to stay and to an extent where they felt safe. I remember clearly most of the group without any provocation telling me they didn't want to work. Twenty years later, except for one tragic loss, the entire group are now working: one head of creative arts in a secondary special school and another a local Green councillor. Tragically, after years of abstinence Elin resumed drinking and died of liver failure. One of her friends on Facebook said: "*The Raven finally got her*."
The symbolism used in *Scratchin' the Surface* had also become the language of a grieving friend to identify her death.

The boys were also in the 'shadow-land' oppressed with a sense of rejection and failure and little in the way of aspiration. After all, their education in a special school wasn't preparing them for university. Most of their post-school choices were focused on joining the forces with Bovington army camp not far from the school.

What drama did, I believe, in both of these groups, Vita Nova and Penwithen, was to begin their journey of an awakening consciousness of the world outside the grey one they dwelt in. The drama process helped them play out some of their pasts and come to a level of acceptance where they could begin to move on and out of the 'shadow-land'. This is an area I explore through this study. Freire illustrates how the oppressed, to an extent, self-oppress:

> They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor consciousness they have internalised. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or

> having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account. (Freire, 1970: 30)

Although the tone in Freire is paradoxically archaic and revolutionary, the root of what he says applies to both of the groups. They were locked in a state of hopelessness partly inflicted, in the case of Vita Nova, by the benefit system and in the Penwithen case by the institutionalisation of young people that sharply separates them from their peers. They felt they had little in the way of choices or how they might transform themselves.

The boys, conditioned by society and themselves, repressed their talents. They had rejected society so their anger manifested itself in an illusion of rebellion against the system. Tragically most of their actions, instead of freeing them, stifled them further as they sabotaged their own futures. One of the biggest accomplishments of the Penwithen drama project was that they finished it. Even though the group tried very hard to reject their own work, ultimately it was completed.

Vita Nova image from *Scratchin' the Surface*.

Graham Lambert who played *Jay* and later became a mentor for the Penwithen Boys.

Raven played by Tim. Photograph: ©Martin Coyne

4.3.1 Creating their own play.

The starting point of the project was the performance of *Scratchin' the Surface* at Penwithen Boys School. This led teacher Eileen Clews to contact the BCCA and ask me if I could make a play with the boys in the same way as I had with the adults in recovery. It seemed problematic as they were based such a long way from the BCCA, over an hour's drive. Eileen was determined this would be a good idea. She wanted the boys to have this opportunity. She somehow obtained a mini-bus and drove it herself bringing Jan Morgan, learning support assistant, and six boys all the way from Weymouth to Boscombe every week for drama workshops. Funding for the project was provided by Penwithen School and the Police Partnership Trust**.**

4.3.2 The Drama Group

The group consisted of seven white, disaffected young men, six from Penwithen, all with Emotional & Behavioural Problems (EBP) and one young man excluded from a local Bournemouth secondary school. Most of the boys had criminal records. We started with four students and finished with seven. No one dropped out.

4.3.3 Support Team

As director and facilitator, I felt I needed back up for this particular project, so I assembled a volunteer team. I asked Graham, Darren and Larry, actors from Vita Nova, to join me because they had all been to prison in their pasts. They all identified with the lads, in particular Graham who played 'Jay' in *Scratchin' the Surface* and had been to a similar institution as Penwithen. He told the boys in the after-show talk how he had lost his brother to an overdose at 16 years old, how he remembered at his brother's funeral all the pupils standing around in their school uniforms.

I also invited another set of recovery people, who were also professional artists: Jordi, a filmmaker from Barcelona, and Martin, a Scottish photographer, to work with us. These two men were in recovery and were trying to make their way back into some form of structure after finding themselves in Bournemouth for rehabilitation.

Apart from the "recovery" guys, added to this mix was Darren or 'young Darren' as he became known, an excluded boy from a local comprehensive who had been placed with us

on so-called “work experience”. He wasn't engaging with school but had some kind of leaning towards drama. The school didn't know what else to do with him, so they sent him to the TIE team. A fortnight’s work experience turned into an indefinite stay. Darren, partly through necessity to keep him occupied, became my ‘helper’. He was the same age as the Penwithen Boys. Throughout this thesis I include him as a Penwithen Boy.

One important aspect of the BCCA was that, apart from offering educational and arts activities, it was also an informal hub, allowing volunteering and work experience. This was a rich dimension of the Centre. School and university students regularly asked to work with the TIE team. The tragedy of closing community arts centres such as BCCA is the loss of informal engagement that is mostly undocumented. This vital work becomes impossible to continue without a base to cater for situations that are often spontaneous. The BCCA and the TIE team provided invaluable stepping-stones for people to move gently into a fuller existence, be it work, employment or just the ability to socialise again.

Another source of support came from the solid team permanently based at the Centre. Tony Horitz, co-director of BTIE, administrator Sharon Watkins and the BCCA staff and technicians. All were welcoming and friendly. The boys were met with an abundance of positivity, people wanting them to succeed.

It may appear that this immense support was proportionally too great for just seven “naughty boys” as they were nicked-named by the staff … in a fond way. It wasn’t. It actually wasn't enough. They needed all of those inputs and more. A small group of very damaged lads felt at times like a huge mass of anger. Trying to soak up their damage with all the good will in the world was not easy. At times, we felt we should stop.

The brief was to make a play with the boys in the same way as I had with Vita Nova. These two groups were in very different stages of their development. With the participants of Vita Nova there was a willingness and excitement to create. This was due to the group having been through a process via treatment and the twelve-step programme[27]. They were in a place of acceptance that they had a problem that they had to deal with. With the lads they were in a place where everyone else was the problem.

[27] A twelve-step programme is a set of guiding principles outlining a course of action for recovery from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioural problems: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve-step_program

Our team had professional artists, teachers, me as an actor/teacher, Eileen and Jan from Penwithen and our volunteer mentors. Eileen and Jan had vast expertise in working with young men with EBP. No one, however, was a therapist or social worker but there was a lot of life experience on hand.

4.3.4 Space

The dedicated space at the BCCA was a notable factor in the success of this project, as it had been with Vita Nova. The boys were coming to a special setting. With a lighting and sound system, though far from being state of the art, it really impressed them, it felt professional. The project in their school would have been impossible. Apart from a lack of theatre facilities, the situation would not have allowed them to try something different because the environment was too familiar, too volatile, too full of negative perceptions; not from the teachers but from putting a large number of damaged kids into one place.

Their travelling to the BCCA was not the problem that I had initially perceived it to be. It was actually beneficial. The mission of getting the lads to the centre proved to be fantastic preparation for the then unknown big expedition they would make to Latvia. Like so much of this project, in hindsight all the pieces of the jigsaw fitted. What took place, due to Eileen Clews's request, became a model project. With Vita Nova most of the group had left their homes and travelled to Bournemouth for recovery. The reason being that a change of environment has been found to have a positive effect on individual recovery. There can be pre-conceptions from those around you and yourself that you will keep repeating the same patterns if you stay in the same place. There was a similarity with the Penwithen boys; a self-fulfilling prophecy that they would continue to be 'bad'. Removed from that expectation there was the possibility to behave differently. The pressure was off.

4.3.5 Purposefulness

What occurred at the BCCA is what often happens in projects partly to do with necessity and lack of recourses. How can we make our circumstance work for our new participants, in this case the Penwithen Boys? Opportunities for further engagement presented themselves. Members from Vita Nova could purposefully become part of the project. This was a useful and meaningful situation for people in early recovery. This model occurred with other community projects that grew out of the BTIE such as Tony Horitz with Gill Horitz setting up Disabled Actors Theatre Company (DATCO) for people with physical and sensory

impairments. They then engaged volunteers from the drama group to become mentors and support workers in other disability projects.

In Autumn 2018 I facilitated a drama project within the residential Pilsdon Community[28]. The residents were an eclectic group who had joined the community for all sorts of reasons, including breakdowns, addiction, bereavement and just the need to escape the rush and madness of life. There was also an area for wayfarers to come and stay for respite: "*Through the unknown, unremembered gate*."[29.] (Eliot: 1955) I learnt a great deal about how their community successfully runs without interventions from professionals, but through the offer of communal living and 'purposeful work'. This gave people a sense of self-worth and dedicated employment.

> There is no therapeutic cure therapeutic cure offered at Pilsdon; it doesn't have any method or course. Much of the way it works is by working: there are jobs that need doing, and people work side-by-side, talking. (Jones, 2007: 162)

The play created at Pilsdon, *The Unknown, Remembered Gate (2018**),*** included residents and wayfarers. It was again authentic, a telling of their stories. On the day before our performance a wayfarer arrived and asked if he could include a monologue he had written about what Pilsdon meant to him. Of course, we were happy to include it. He took a piece of paper out of his pocket where he had scribed his own version of Shakespeare's Richard II's speech. His words rang out in the autumn afternoon:

> This little solace this precious beacon of light, and peace
> Select in a turbulent sea of discontent which serves it like an office, or a wall
> Remote defensive to this house which welcomes people from far less happier lives.
> (James Morris, 2018)

The last supper scene at Pilsdon, set out on bales of hay delivered by a completely eclectic set of people, was described by one of the participants as being one of the most profound experiences he had undergone.

[28] Pilsdon was founded in 1958 to be a community of prayer, hospitality and work. Today the same ethos prevails and Pilsdon provides a place for people from all walks of life to come together and share a common life. Pilsdon has an open door to those who need refuge at a particular point in their life – some come whilst recovering from alcoholism or addiction, others coping with mental illness or following a crisis point in their life... The community also offers hospitality to wayfarers and people who are homeless. https://www.pilsdon.org.uk

[29] T.S. Eliot's poem 'Little Gidding' was inspired by Nicholas Ferrar 's (1625) community at 'Little Gidding', as was the setting up of the Pilsdon community.

Increasingly, after all my years of involvement, applied drama is for me a meeting of people exactly where they are and including them in the creation. Giving people agency and acknowledging that what we are involved with is in a constant state of flux which, although challenging, is also beautiful as there are always possibilities for the unexpected and, at times, moments of deep understanding.

What we were doing at the Centre with the Penwithen boys was not just a drama activity for the sake of it, it was purposeful. The boys' impetus in the project was a highly responsible one. They were creating a play about drug abuse and making choices that might affect the rest of their lives. I discovered through all the later interviews with the Penwithen boys that they had understood and been aware that what they were doing was important and meaningful. I don't wish to reduce applied drama to a utilitarian act but to emphasise the significance of creating something that has something to say. In so doing it gives people a sense of accomplishment. I found from my research with Vita Nova that being able to give back something, having the opportunity to be altruistic was precious when their lives had been chaotic, and they felt a sense of failure. These boys were much younger than Vita Nova but they certainly understood failure. Their interviews revealed that 'purpose' was a strong outcome within the research.

I believe also that at the root of why applied drama works, alongside releasing creativity, is because it creates communities. The word 'family' is a recurring word that I have heard through thirty years of drama work. On the 29th April 2019 at a Vita Nova performance post-show talk for those in treatment at Addiction[30], one of the participants described the group as 'family'. For the lads in particular to form a group, a team, as opposed to the motley collection of damaged boys who first arrived at the Centre was an incredible feat.
Whilst revisiting the project it is possible to view the layers of support that added structure and confidence at each turn. The boys were 'held' throughout the process. The notion of being 'held 'was something I picked up from Mary Davis at Pilsdon. The constituents of the community gave a strong sense of belonging and safety. I see this with applied projects. There is the support network of the facilitators and project leaders but also an understanding and acceptance from the group that empathises and gives leeway when someone is finding things challenging or behaving in a chaotic or dysfunctional way.

[30] Trinity Project/Addaction Trinity Project: serves members of the local community with advice and information on all matters regarding drug, alcohol and NPS ('novel psychoactive substances' or 'so called legal highs') use or misuse.

4.3.6 The process

I had decided to use the drama methods I had developed through working with Vita Nova in 1999; in particular the use of images and putting stories into theatrical forms and working around improvisations based on their lived experiences. My awareness that the composition of Vita Nova was so different to that of Penwithen meant I had to adapt my material to accommodate the current group.

My approach to facilitating had to shift to catering from adults who were in a state of transition due to their on-going recovery process, to a disparate group of angry young men, unpoliticised and on the cusp of fearlessness. So as a facilitator my thinking had to change in order to take on this new challenge.

For the following section I refer closely to *Report 1* whilst weaving in observations from another project *Give us a Voice*, a programme for adult refugees (2001). I again worked with them on a variation of the same basic material I had used with Vita Nova, but once more having to adapt those drama structures for a very different group.
Retrospectively, I will try to understand what was happening with the applied drama work that was undertaken primarily with Penwithen but also making links with Vita Nova and the Refugee Drama Group*.*

> ***Description of the project:***
>
> The project was like a roller-coaster, up and down emotionally. As the play became more structured and performing it became a reality, then the issue of self-destruct came in loud and clear for the group. Several times they were on the cusp of destroying all that had been painstakingly created. Once again, my work with Vita Nova had informed me of this tendency, as several times it looked as if Vita Nova would self-destruct because they knew failure better than they knew success. (Coyne: 2002:2)

Changing patterns of behaviour and 'old records' are particularly hard for young people to shift. Drama can support this process by introducing different options through the drama process and via offering alternative conversations and experience such as their regular visits to the BCCA provided for the boys.

A large support team to work with the Penwithen boys was vital. We needed to help each other fight the build-up of rejection that took place as we came close to performance. If I

were to create a character to personify this manifestation of self-destruction from the group, it would be a hissing, kicking animal: part snake, part cub and part dog. Like the 'Raven' it could suck all the joy out of everything. So as a team we had to be strong, because ultimately what the creature wanted was for us to reject it. That was very powerful, and I certainly felt at times I'd had enough. But the teachers and I were stoic in our approach to this project.

The self-destruction that was apparent in both Vita Nova and Penwithen relates to the internalised oppression they carried. Freire's description of the oppressed being: "conditioned by the myths of the old order," has resonance for the Penwithen Boys who believed deep down that they were on the bottom of the pile within society. So that even with the chance of success "The shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over them," leading to a: "fear of freedom." (Freire, 1970: 28)

The aims and objectives of The Penwithen boys project were typical of many applied projects; such as '*To improve the self-esteem of the students by participating in the drama /theatre project' (See Appendix 4: 4.3.6).*
Significantly the boys were adamant that they were creating a play for young children:

> … they did not want to perform for their peers. There was a whole list of schools that 'no way' would they perform there and the thought of performing at Penwithen was almost unthinkable. However very soon on we realised that we were making a play for teenagers. As time went on the creation of a 'cool' play made the group feel confident and quite willing to share their work with their peers. (Coyne, 2002: 3)

In hindsight the fact that the boys did perform in front of their peers and importantly at their own school was a huge act of courage. It served as a rite of passage for them. It is interesting to reflect on how Edward Bond feels about young people performing his play *The Children*. Bond states that he hopes:

> …[That) taking part in the play, the experience itself will be a 'journey', 'a rite of passage' that may help them to understand themselves and their world.
> (Davis, 2005: 140).

Certainly, the more the boys performed their play about their realities the more they began to view the world differently and gain confidence.

The need for the facilitator to always strive for the aesthetic is pivotal. The artistic framework the facilitator gives to groups such as Penwithen is like a form of theatrical armour that protects the individual from disclosing their direct truths to the audience. This armour allowed the boys to feel confident in what they achieved. They felt their play was good enough for them to stand in front of not just strangers but in their school, a school for young people with emotional and behavioural problems.

4.3.7 The mentors

The Vita Nova mentors were essential. I recount in Report 1 how they were strong role models among other positive attributes. *(See Appendix 4: 4.3.7).* However, the list misses out the gender factor. All the volunteers were quite 'cool' males, especially Larry with his dread locks. They all had personality and real street-cred. The boys were very conscious of how they looked and the music they listened to. So, for the lads who lacked male role models the mentors were perfect. They also served well as a counter to the rather strong female presence of the two teachers from Penwithen and myself. Added to this, they had been through situations that some of the lads dysfunctionally aspired to, such as spending time in jail and being 'hard'. Their description of jail definitely broke any romantic views the boys may have held.

For the mentors it was almost as if they were given an opportunity to help their lost younger selves through supporting the boys. They gave their time freely and in turn they gained respect and feelings of worth.

4.3.8 Starting points

Session One:

The project was modelled on work devised for Vita Nova -
The choice of stimulus with any group is key to the development of that group. I was looking for something that would evoke a reaction easily from Penwithen. In the case of Vita Nova, I used a striking picture I cut out of the Guardian of a Kurdish refugee *(see Appendix 5)* Vita Nova had identified with the picture, to them symbolising loss and alienation. I wanted to try out this principle with the boys. However, as my first session with the boys was around the time of the terrorist attacks in New York I decided instead to use Munch's *The Scream* for the stimulus of our first session. The same image I used for 'Give Us a Voice' project. The notion behind using such a highly emotional and evocative picture was that the group could easily relate to it but with a distance from their own direct experiences. The boys became engaged with the picture quickly. They could empathise with the sense of

anxiety. Through a series of drama techniques that were mainly built around creating images and adding feeling we quickly constructed a piece of theatre. The group was very excited; they could feel they had made something.

Spontaneous responses to The Scream:
Some of these comments I believe are very revealing about what they saw in the main figure's face, what they themselves associate with blind terror**.**

Journal:
Terror
What have I done to my head?
Something happened to my family
Lonely
Help
How much
Trouble
Not me
Worried
Pain
Wet myself
Fear
I don't believe it
Something has gone wrong
Stole something
This hurts

These gut responses are interesting. The group, who had never seen the picture before and in fact thought it was probably a modern picture, brought their own agendas to it. In particular … 'something happened to my family', 'wet myself 'and 'stole something'. This is what horror spontaneously meant to these young men. Had I asked them, without the picture of The Scream, what frightened them I doubt I would have got such honesty.
Through looking at the picture we created images and put words to them. Their knowledge of understanding the feelings of the man in the picture soon became theatre. The group was amazed that they had created something. They wanted to repeat the sequence we had made over and over. Of course, adding theatrical light to their images heightened the experience. It is my belief that the sooner you can create something solid tangible, like their physical images, that groups become quickly involved in the creative process. Another outcome of showing this picture: Bradley went away and down-loaded information about the artist from the internet. The group expressed an interest in graffiti art and I was able to obtain art books on this subject and also Jackson Pollock in the following weeks. Some student responses after session one:

Dan:	*Excitement and adrenaline. I can do this.*
Bradley:	*Loads of fun.*
David:	*Good feeling of what it's like, didn't get nervous.*

(Coyne, 2002: 5**)**

The 9.11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center had a massive effect on the consciousness of everyone, especially as the images of the attack had been seen repeatedly

through the media. When it happened in 2001, the community police had actually visited the BCCA to check if I was alright because I had been working with a group of refugees on a project called 'Give Us a Voice'. The drama group consisted mainly of Afghans. After 9.11 some of the participants disappeared to London and we didn't see them again. The police, because of their involvement with Vita Nova, had become very aware of the drama work at the BCCA. It was with the refugees that I had first used Munch's *The Scream*. I had again rejected the refugee picture I had used with Vita Nova as this had seemed far too close to their experience. After speaking to Robbie Brook, the visual artist on the 'Give Us a Voice' project, he suggested using *The Scream* as a good image to evoke feelings and also bring us into the world of art, so he could pick up on the discipline of painting and the use of colour. The decision to use Munch's *The Scream* with the Penwithen Boys was because I didn't want to open up the possibility of racism. We had such little time and it was enough to deal with just getting the lads engaged with the work. However, I was to find out later in the project that racism wasn't an issue that could be avoided. The *'Give Us a Voice'* project and The Penwithen project were to collide over this very matter at a later date.

It is interesting to compare the two different responses to the same stimulus. The following abridged excerpt from *The Give Us a Voice* report identifies some of refugees' responses:

> ***'Thought flow':*** *inspired by Munch's The Scream 16.05.01 at The College*
>
> *Tired, scared*
> *Afraid*
> *He looks sick, ill*
> *… shouting for help*
> *He has died*
> *He is looking for somewhere safe*
> *Looking like a ghost*
> *He is complaining that they are walking away from a good situation to a situation that is not very good*
> *Boat – the boat could be inviting these people to join them*
>
> *After the 'thought flow' exercise we then moved on to 'moulding'… a technique used to recreate an image using an actor to be sculpted by the audience. It is an ideal exercise for a cross arts project as it has an emphasis on observation… … I asked if someone would volunteer to be 'moulded' as the key figure in The Scream, but said if no one wanted to, I would stand in. Thankfully Shir Sha volunteered; it turned out he had worked for television in Afghanistan. The group was delighted that one of them had gone forward and they were highly supportive of him.*

'Moulding' him broke the ice, as there was quite a lot of laughter. When a consensus had been agreed, that he was in the correct stance, we 'thought tracked'[31] his now character The Scream. The 'thought tracking' took place creating our first piece of script that Shir Sha delivered with real confidence:

Help!
Suicidal (I want to kill myself)
I died
My life is very hard
(Coyne, 2001: 7)

It is evident that the careful selecting of a suitable starting point for applied drama work that is both sensitive to the group yet strong enough to stimulate dialogue is vital. The work I had carried out with Vita Nova informed me that it was necessary to harness people's emotions in a safe environment. It was clear that people really wanted to speak about their feelings, but necessary that they had some kind of protection. They were talking about the man who featured in a picture of a Kurdish refugee in Vita Nova's case, and the figure in *The Scream* for both the refugees' group and the Penwithen Boys but they were all revealing truths about their own existences.

The introduction of theatre ritual is important. The focus on 'moulding'[32] the body, the detail of the outside appearance that was collectively negotiated by all three groups took away from self-obsession as they were concentrating on the task. What was occurring in all three projects was a form of drama therapy. Phil Jones states that: "In dramatherapy the paradox that 'what is fictional is also real' is crucial to its efficacy as a therapy." (Jones, 2000: 10). This was very much the case when working with these images – real and unreal at the same time; a way of expressing almost subconsciously; with Penwithen: "*Something happened to my family, "*or *"Wet myself."* Was it fiction or a way of expressing their reality? With the refugee group were they making a fiction of articulating a truth? "*He is complaining that they are walking away from a good situation to a situation that is not very good?"*

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[31] Thought Track :(National Drama's definition of *thought tracking* the inner thoughts of a character is revealed either by the person adopting that role or by the others in the group. This is a particularly useful way of slowing down and deepening a drama especially if used in conjunction with *Still Images*. A further development of this is to have the participants draw the distinction between what a role says; what it thinks and what it feels.

[32] Moulding or Sculpting: is a drama strategy where someone becomes like clay and the rest of the group with the facilitator, negotiate how that person should be presented -with an emphasis on a detailed representation e.g. which way is the character looking? Are they standing or sitting?

Returning to the Penwithen process, my next step as a facilitator was to reach into the boys' memories; a risky yet necessary area that we needed to explore as part of building our story. This was due to the fact that they had originally decided to make a play for eleven-year-olds. As they were fifteen and sixteen it felt necessary that we should investigate how it is to be eleven. In order to do this, I worked on a variation of a Boal exercise firstly, examining their fears and dreams at the time and secondly exploring their fears and dreams when they were eleven. This exercise revealed a great deal, providing an insight into this particular group's make up. The drama process is always about two kinds of learning: the participants' self-discovery and the facilitator's constant observation and her deepening understanding of the group she is working with. What were their fears in life? What did they want? What did they hope for? What were their dreams? What a privileged position as facilitator to hear such profound thoughts. The ideas that the boys put down onto large pieces of paper could not normally be discussed. There are always surprises in these exercises. The lads who were presenting themselves as hard young men with all their swearing and attitude were 'frightened of the dark' and the horrifying revelation of glue sniffing at just eleven years old, an incredibly dangerous past-time:

> Sniffing glue can be life-threatening. Even if the result isn't fatal, the risks associated with glue and other inhalants include possible brain damage and severe breathing problem." (Healthline, 2018)

Journal:
Selected responses - What are your Dreams and Fears currently at 14/15 years?
Not being accepted
Fear of the dark
To be a great football player
To move back with my family
To become a police officer
To marry a rich beautiful singer
Lottery
To be successful
Fear of being independent
Fear of death

Various group responses to the question. How did you feel at 11 years?
Wanting to be a teenager
Treated like a kid
Wanted a bit of respect
Cool people can't go to school
Not much rights
Parents use you
Scared of big school
Scary - fear of opposite sex but attracted all the same

Playing up to the crowd to impress
My elder brother is doing it - so it's cool
Sniffing aerosol and glue, paint/petrol
Peer pressure
If they don't like you for who you are - not their mates
Get into fights
(Coyne 2002: 6)

2001. Rehearsal with the Penwithen Boys at the BCCA. Photograph: ©Martin Coyne

4.3.9 Working–script

During the early workshops we discussed the making of the actual play: planning a scenario, then improvising around it and editing the work together. Constantly keeping a working-script, is for me, the lynchpin for ensuring the continuity of the emerging play. Often people can be missing or there are interruptions in the work, so the working-script becomes the solid, tangible element of the process. Constant re-editing of the play is essential within the process. Often groups will be critical of one's efforts to put something together, in the form of a very loose working-script, by pointing out: "You've got it wrong," that it wasn't that way, or that you left out this and that. However, after feeble attempts to explain it's just a start, a beginning, I now realise these moments, although trying, are really necessary. It shows an interest and engagement in what is happening, that they want to be part of shaping the process that getting it right suddenly becomes important. Taking a group seriously and

writing in their corrections is all part of them beginning to take ownership of their play. The working – script is a vital tool.

The knowledge we were working towards performing our play to an audience drove the drama. I think this focus in nearly all the applied projects I have carried out has been of great significance. On one level it is a very simple method. 'We are going to make a play together'. The doing of this, however, is far from simple, especially after the initial excitement wears off. To make a play, when the participants' lives are chaotic is a challenge.

The concept of naming, giving a title is a positive theme that emerges from the project. The lads had a piece of drama with a strong title, '*Til It All Went Wrong*, that emerged in one of the early workshops. Suddenly, with a name for our play we were in business. It was going to happen. They were now actors and performers with a job to do. They had a role, a purpose. Beyond this was Darren; he in particular benefited from being my 'helper,' my assistant. He had a responsibility, which meant he wasn't just there because no one knew what to do with him. He was there as a support worker. The participants from Penwithen all desperately wanted to be grown up. The naming process gave them a sense they were being adult and were being taken seriously.

> **Two difficult sessions:**
> **Journal 30.10.01**
> *All six students turned up which was a miracle as it was their half term… However, the session didn't start right. ...Eileen said a couple had been excluded the previous week … so there had been a bit of a gap. Nick in particular was negative which seemed to bring the group down. He took against the photographer Martin who had been asked to take pictures during rehearsal, which was maybe understandable. Nick has a great deal of anger which can set the pace and atmosphere for the group. So, there was a time, to put it mildly, when it was like climbing up an incredibly steep hill or cliff. Nathan is the shyest in the group and he has real problems staying with things. It was obvious that he finds his part as the policemen almost impossible so I decided not to put him through it but do something stylised. Darren comes at lunch so Nick and Dan were saying they could not do the rap. I explained the importance of working with who we have got, getting a feel for the whole play, the studio is a place where things do not have to be perfect. They did try to do the scene without Darren, which was something. I explained to Nick about an extra small add-on to the scene to help the story. He reverts to "you're changing it". Nick makes it clear he is not interested in the new bit. Bradley`s performance has gone backwards after two weeks of not seeing him. However, David has maintained his enthusiasm and remembered all his lines. Dan is also really positive and gave energy to the warm up and the rehearsal…However there was little real energy or belief in what they were doing … we broke for lunch. Question …would they return after lunch? They did return and the afternoon was focused.*

Journal 14.11.01: Nick *walks out and turns the corner*

… we have a good working-script. Penwithen arrived. There had been an incident and I was informed by the teachers that Nick was in a bad mood. Dan came into the studio wearing his bandanna. Nick came in carrying his. Oh great, I said, you have brought your bandannas. Nick said: "I am not going to wear it!" We had a talk about the day and our hope to perform the play on the 21 November. There was a mixture of fear and excitement…

Then rehearsal began. I was not actually clear in my next instruction. I asked everyone to get into positions then I changed my instruction to: "No let's have a quick warm up." That was it, Nick blew a gasket, got his jacket, asked John for his tape and walked out swearing as he went! That was what he was looking for Eileen said. Dan commented "Well we can't do it now!" … … Dan and then all the group went to look for him. Fortunately, Nick had not gone too far away, in fact, he was just outside. The group talked him round and he re-entered. It was quite something for him to come back as he had made a very strong exit… … Of course, Nick has got a key role in the play and he is a strong influence in the group. But he came back and we went straight into rehearsal. The first run was a little flat but as we got over the rocky start, we were able to work into it.

The significance of this rehearsal is that it showed me several things:
The group really wanted to do the play
Nick was able to battle with his pride so that he came back
The group realised how important everyone is to each other
The group were frightened
They are more comfortable with failure, so for them this play is an act of bravery.
(*ibid*: 8)

I am constantly changing things, having new ideas. Looking back, I can see that my lack of clarity was not good for someone like Nick. Shifting things around was not an exciting, creative experiment but confusing and unsettling for him. I have learnt over time, and partly to do with this project, that with a very inexperienced group there is no space for too much chopping and changing. It's actually not fair on the group. With Vita Nova they relished trying out different approaches to the script, but they were in such a different space mentally. So, I did learn from this and still have to check my enthusiasm. In the rehearsal I had gone off plan: *let's start the rehearsal… no let's have a warm up first*. It was the catalyst for Nick's anger, my switching the order of activities. But I think if it hadn't been over this issue, his anger would have come out elsewhere.

At some point in the applied drama process it also becomes a battle between the group and the facilitator. She sees the need to complete the project as a vital symbol in their growth. That element in the process of accomplishing, finishing and endings are all things that marginalised groups struggle with at a core level. The group perceive they have power

against the facilitator, their teachers and an institution because when an audience is expected the participants can threaten not to perform. Here there is leverage for control. They see how crucial the project is not just to themselves but also to those supporting them. And it has to be deeply important, there needs to be a commitment there or no project would ever happen. It is a perverse power the participants hold, because they are willing to sacrifice the work of the whole group and their own efforts. A lack of self-worth and a deep conditioning that your path is to fail, to ruin things, makes for a bumpy journey.

However, passing through the pain barrier is liberating for the participants. It is a jump into the unknown. For people who have not made any theatre before, the overriding emotion is that you don't want to look stupid or make a fool of yourself. For a group where image was a paramount preoccupation, performing in front of an audience was a huge risk. As a facilitator you have to have faith in the process and reaffirm, however hard it may be, that whatever happens the play will go ahead, that the group is bigger than the individual, even if inside you are feeling pretty crushed that one of leading actors is saying he won't do it.

4.3.10 Individually prescribe activities

Darren, Nick and Dan overshadowed the others sometimes as they had such big personalities and tended to monopolise. Nathan, Bradley and Kieran on the other hand were quiet people by nature. For them to perform in public was a greater feat than for the three extroverts. There was also David, a hostel boy, who was confident and very committed to the project throughout.

The following extract is fragments from my journal, small snap shots of those boys in 2001/2. They hold a lens onto how the facilitator at times needs to individually prescribe activities for participants who need extra scaffolding, to hold them within a project. For Nathan giving him a character, which was almost an exaggeration of his real self, helped him. For Callum the introduction of the drum, gave him some business, a prop which offered him a degree of confidence. Bradley needed an extra push so he could move beyond repeating exactly what was in the working-script. I have not been able to discover the whereabouts of these three quieter boys.

Journal fragments:

Nathan
Nathan was really finding his character for the first time, he seemed really relaxed and was enjoying himself. Until today Nathan never really seemed to engage in the project; it was as if he always shuts himself out and is always on the fringes. His character 'Dopy' is an extension of himself, almost Pinteresque, but it works dramatically.
I was a little worried about it. Was this character reinforcing his alienation? I talked to Eileen and Jan about it. They said it was great that he had something of his own, that he was getting laughs and appreciation for his part. The reality was that the character of 'Dopy' gave Nathan such self-esteem, a sense of belonging and a voice.

Kieran
I spent time with Kieran as I felt he might be getting lost. Instead of just tapping his legs in the rap scene he is now going to have a small drum. We also worked on the timing of the fight.

Bradley
Bradley grew as the project went on. He received a great deal of support from Eileen and Jan who managed to keep him attending regardless of his turbulent outside life. For him theatre and drama were completely alien to his experience but he found that he enjoyed being part of something. Towards the end in one rehearsal Bradley built his character's part in the play and improvised around the death of 'Ice', I was amazed that he was able to let himself do this. He had to be persuaded to have a go but when he did, his words were powerful. It was an important moment for Bradley because he, like Kieran, David and Nathan had found it hard to move on with his character and tended to repeat exactly what they had done before. I think that is why drama is so important for young people because it helps them to become a little more flexible.

4.3.11 Building a fiction.

The building of the fiction to protect the actors was vital within the process. After discussion with the boys, it was felt that the element of crime was missing in the plot. This led to their attempting to devise a *Shop Lifting* scene. However, it became apparent that their endeavours were not working:

> …we needed to explore how it felt to be arrested as it wasn't coming across in the play…The teachers sensitively left the room. We were at a stage in the project where there was real trust. We were in a safe space… They could also see that it was important that we got this part right. This was after all something they knew about as they had first-hand experience.

Group's Sharing of incidents about the Police:

X: Putting sweets and aerosols in your bag. The lady stopped me and searched my bag. Then a bloke took over and the Police came and I was

taken to the office in the shop. I was questioned and taken home. I was 10 or 11 years old. I was shaking when it happened and I thought: "I'm going to get done by my Mum." The Police took my fingerprints and gave me a caution, searched my bag.

X: Yeah, I was in total fear of my father

X: I was 13 years. It was serious to do with a shotgun. I was shaking.

X: Attempted murder. I was crapping my pants. I was drunk and I'd had a smoke. I was 36 hours in a cell. It's like an adrenaline rush but not a good one. But the Police were really rough with me.

With this real information we improvised the crime scene. We kept redrafting it until we had a working-script. (Coyne, 2002: 11)

The students were experts; the holders of knowledge. They were drawing on their experiences so that we could extract information to inform the drama. In all cases there was no bravado or euphoria about their retelling of their situations. 'Fear' emerges from their words about their criminal activity, as being the predominant emotion. Through speaking about those incidents, sharing with one another, it became part of the healing process. The act of retelling their stories, not to impress but to say it as it was, reminded them of uncomfortable times that, at least for that moment, they didn't want to repeat.

The following excerpt from *'Til It All Went Wrong* demonstrates how the information they shared was then put into action. I introduced stylisation into Scene 4 when Spike was alone on the stage with voices, calling out to him. This was to embody and heighten the feelings of fear they expressed. The power of negative peer pressure is also highlighted in this scene.

Scene 3: Shop Lifting

S.D. DMX (Bradley) and SPIKE (David) stand at either end of the stage, they meet centre stage

DMX: Let's do this

SPIKE: No, I really don't want to do it. I can't remember what you said

DMX: It's easy, you just go in there and get the stuff while I distract him

SPIKE: No, I don't want to

DMX: Don't mess it up for me!

SPIKE: Alright

S.D. They go into the shop. The following action shows Spike getting set-up by DMX. Spike is caught with stolen CDs. At that moment the group move around him shouting out 'thief' and then whispering 'you are all alone'.

SCENE 4:

SGT WOOLMINGTON: Spike, Spike, my name is Sergeant Woolmington. Now tell me about your friend

SPIKE: I haven't got a friend

VOICE: Come on Spike, stops messing us around. This is wasting a lot of our time. Who was the 'chappy' who walked into the shop with you? Who was the boy you were with?

SPIKE: Don't know

VOICE: What's your Mum going to say?

SPIKE: She won't care

VOICE: Do you want a criminal record?

VOICE: Do you want to shame your family?

VOICE: Do you want a criminal record?

SGT WOOLMINGTON: I'll leave you to think things over, Spikey

SPIKE: I don't really want to be here. I don't want to grass him up. He'll get me, but I don't want to be here.

ALL: Spike!

SPIKE: I'm all alone

These scenes demonstrate the outcome of the relationship between the participants and me in sharing knowledge in a safe environment. The medium of theatre in this case is not 'Verbatim' but has been placed into a theatrical fiction. Their stories have been amalgamated, the essence extrapolated, stylised and refined. Although firmly based on the participants' truths, their narratives have also become separated from them and placed within a fiction. To an extent as soon as a story has been spoken, it no longer belongs solely to the teller. The teller is also in the process of self-editing what he or she wants to tell. The Penwithen Boys' play however can still be seen as an example of ethnodrama.

The question of ethical considerations is always paramount for the facilitator. Within the Theatre in Education team there were always discussions regarding the groups we were working with. As teacher/actors we relied on our common sense. It felt right not to use the boys' actual names in the play. As they were nervous about preforming, the more stylised we made the play the more protected they felt. The boys enjoyed the process of giving their characters names DMX, ICE SMOKEY, 'D', DOPEY and MICKEY because the characters fitted into their fantasies of being cool rap stars.

The conversation around the use of verbatim within actual performances is discussed at length in *Performing Research*. "*Deciding whether to use the data verbatim or whether to alter it all …causes ethnodramatists considerable anxiety*." (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010: 46). Ackroyd and O'Toole, whilst focusing on a variety of case studies, highlight how:

> … ethnodramatists are caught up with ethical considerations. Many of the case study ethnographers share their decision-making processes about whether to keep characters according to the voices who gave the dialogue or whether to blend the dialogue to create compound, hybrid characters. Inherent in the dilemma is at one extreme the need to be loyal to the data and at the other, the need to protect the source of the script. (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010: 46)

In the case of the Penwithen Boys, it was them offering their knowledge as we developed a storyline together. It had felt necessary to protect their identities as they had criminal records. One of the case studies referred to by Ackroyd and O'Toole was undertaken by Jill Robinson. Although a very different topic (working with children with serious illness), she states how she decided to:

> …amalgamate transcripts, bringing narrative from different people into a range of characters. She saw this as essential in securing the participants' identities. (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010: 46).

Robinson's process, as with the other case studies in the book, is very research based, yet there are definite parallels with Penwithen in drawing several narratives together and safeguarding their identities. Our play was about discovering how terrible decisions regarding drug abuse and peer pressure can have a critical impact on young people's lives. It was also about making a piece of theatre with very inexperienced actors. The students were acting out their own stories. So, my work with the boys was very much informed by using the material they shared, making sure there was a solid story line and structure for the boys to work with. Importantly, there had to be a level of aesthetic worth in what we produced. I was delivering an applied project that had been commissioned. Researching through active dialogue with a group was part of the work. Getting to know the group you were working with and building trust is TIE and community theatre good practice. Journals, note-taking and reports were activities I regularly pursued as a drama practitioner as a way of recording the on-going progress of the group.

4.3.12 introducing an audience

When the play was finally made, it was shared on safe ground at the BCCA as a pilot. The group felt proud of what they had made.

> **Journal**
> *… we were able to do a run through with a small audience. I find bringing in small audiences really useful as it means that the group concentrates harder and it gets then used to the idea of performance… The sharing worked so well. The concentration was excellent. Now the group feels safe because they can see the shape of the play. It was an amazing transformation from the morning. There was a real buzz when they finished. It was an achievement...*
> (Coyne, 2002: 10)

Their original protestations of not performing for their peers evaporated and they agreed to share their play in several secondary schools. So, we took '*Til It All Goes Wrong* on a short tour. This was, I believe, courageous. Excluded boys were going into mainstream secondary schools. Going back in some cases to the schools they had been expelled from.
The following are comments made by GCSE drama students about the play:

> *'What do you think the play is about?'*
>
> *Drugs*
> A rapping band
> *Friendship*
> *Peer pressure*
> *Lost hope*
> *Loneliness everything collapses*

It put the message across about drugs
(Royal Manor Portland 2002)

Journal: *Parallel with Vita Nova, the presence of the boys encouraged the males in the audience group to respond. The drama group were very articulate in the discussion.*
I think that these young people read the essence of the play. We had created a modern play that was multi-media using rap music, video, movement and drama …a play that explored some of the struggles that some young people go through: struggles of being young, fitting in, initiating into the group, the gang fighting, experimenting with drugs, feeling bored and restless and coping with loss. The initiation of 'Spike' into the gang led him into crime and being caught by the police, the use of drugs led 'Ice' to his death. The dramas of life that lead to heavy consequences are real for Penwithen and were expressed in the play.
(Coyne, 2002: 13)

A further act of sheer heroism was their performance at their own school, Penwithen. It showed that as a group, originally a very fractious group chosen by their teacher and including Darren, they had bonded. They were a team and they accepted each other. And it wasn't just schools we performed to. Because of BTIE connections other invitations and opportunities arose, and we took them. The British Council Teachers' Conference on inclusion and the Exeter University International Research Conference. It was at Exeter that the boys received an invitation to Latvia.

Authenticity works. There is now an emerging understanding that if you want to talk about something of importance you need to make sure that you are dealing with people who really know. Young people listened to the Penwithen boys because they spoke the same language. For the adults, the educationalists, such performance platforms furnish them with possible portals to understand their actions. Not distant statistics but young talented men.
The conclusions within Report 1 outlined the key outcomes of the project *(See Appendix 4: 4.3.12 for extended extracts*).

The testimony from the teachers regarding the success of the project was very strong:

> Drama at BTIE has given this group of boys success, which they never believed they could achieve. They have had to learn to live with this success at school, which they sometimes have found difficult. It has been amazing to watch them develop a belief in themselves, that they have the potential to achieve- perhaps it may seem late in their education and we should start this at a very much earlier age. The most important thing is these boys can go forward, learn, and achieve.
>
> Eileen Clews (*op. cit*: 13)

Reviewing my words written in 2002 I am beginning to become more measured about what a drama project can accomplish in a landscape of social injustice:

> …although the drama project has produced real elements of change, we cannot expect miracles… … The shift from behaviour within the realms of the studio to the bigger world will take time as will the expectations of their behaviour from others. But it is an important step to learning a different way of behaviour… At their school they are also seen as role models.
> (ibid: 13)

Identified also within the conclusions was the importance of using multimedia and my ongoing strategy to work from a starting point of what people 'can do' and then include those gifts within in the process. Dan could roller skate, so we used this in the play.
A significant observation was:

> …that this group of white males, some of whom had used racist language, had adopted as their culture American Black rap music. Their language, dress, and music were built around this influence… The lads had claimed the music … as a backdrop to their lives in predominately white Dorset. … … The Penwithen boys have used what looks like an alien culture and made it theirs. When you look at it closer maybe it's not so alien. Some of the group who come from the estates have lived their lives, not unlike the gangsters of the bad boys of rap… (*Ibid:14*)

The report identifies how the participants becoming a team that was able to cooperate and create a piece of theatre.

> We were invited to Latvia not because it was a group of EBD young people, but because the festival director liked the play.
>
> What was overriding about working on this project was the power of drama and how it can absorb some of the anger and pain that people go through. How the negativity of life's experiences can be shaped into a positive experience. The play *'Til It All Went Wrong* was in fact to an extent: When it all Went Right. For the duration of the play at least, people worked as one and not against each other and more importantly not against themselves.
> (*ibid*: 16)

I am growing in pragmatism but still retain optimism that applied drama can have the potential to impact on people's lives, even when the odds are so heavily stacked against them. I also observe back then in 2001/2 the notion of a lack of real cultural heritage that leads the boys to assume a quasi-American Ghetto style culture; the importance of belonging and forming friendships.
There was a need for a variety of approaches. The film and photography were also part of the group having special positive attention. Their images were celebrated.
What can be seen clearly is that the Penwithen Project in 2001/2 was a real success.

At the time their behaviour became more positive. Dan's foster mother wrote to us saying:

> Since becoming involved with 'theatre' through Vita Nova, Danny's confidence has grown more than I thought possible. He is a different young man. He enjoys all aspects of his involvement.
> Also the reports coming from school each week have greatly improved. Danny has had a very turbulent past - now there is less anger and less aggression.
> Thank you (letter 19.03.02, Norma Penny)

That the lads were invited to perform in Latvia, by a theatre director who had no idea who they were, only that they were young men performing their play to a standard that was good enough for her to invite them to Riga, illustrates that the boys had not just grown in confidence but had learnt strong acting skills.

Dan sums up all of my aspirations for quantifying success. At the end of the project, he said:

> *"For the first time we created something instead of destroying something"*
> Dan, 2002

Part Two: Latvia

The setting out of our trip to Riga will be at the focus of this section. However, there are two other aspects I will also be considering. Firstly, I had not contemplated until I started to recount this odyssey, the impact it had on myself. Secondly, I have only mentioned briefly that one of the group, Bradley, never made it to Latvia. Out of the seven Penwithen Boys who had worked so hard on making their piece, *'Til it All Went Wrong*, he was not on the plane.

In this part I draw from the second report written at the time, *Penwithen Boys Trip to Latvia to perform 'Til It All Went Wrong at The Baltic Festival of Love Riga, Latvia 9-12th June 2002* [33], For the purpose of this thesis I will refer to it as *Report 2*.

4.4 My journey.

Where was I emotionally back in 2002? My own work as part of the TIE team was the framework that was keeping me from completely going over the edge. My life outside of work was falling apart. I wonder now if the boys sensed any of this turmoil? It was a trauma that had been rolling on for years and was coming to a head; a marriage breakdown and my father's failing health. Parts of it are hazy now as I have banished that intense period from my mind. I do remember someone in the audience of the Penwithen Play, possibly someone in social services saying: "this will all seem like a distant dream one day." It seemed impossible then but he was right. I was almost addicted to my work helping others, so I didn't have to face up to my own reality. Looking back, I can see I was hiding and, in going to Latvia, I was running away. But, at the time I wouldn't have been able to articulate that; and to an extent it saved me. The *purposeful* work I spoke about for the boys and Vita Nova also held me together as their facilitator. It was later not being able to stop that pattern, that it became a problem. From an autoethnographic perspective I was undergoing a huge life event. I was coping by working, having a *purpose* but it did also have an impact on how I perceived that trip to Latvia. In a way we were all escaping from our lives in England.
I remember that around this time Tim, who played 'Raven' in Vita Nova's *Scratchin' the Surface,* would often phone me on a Sunday about work, but I realised later on it was a veiled way of him checking up on me to see if I was alright. I wasn't, but his calls were always

[33] This second report later became amalgamated with the first.

helpful. When you are struggling, you think you have it all well-hidden. But sometimes the pain leaks out.

I was, perhaps still am, without putting it too dramatically a *wounded healer*. Carl Jung said: 'Only the wounded physician heals.' (Jung, 1961: 134). I have had an awakening writing this section so that I am going to try to make sense of where I was and am now, and will embark on a partially Jungian journey. It could be a missing part of the jigsaw, as being a *wounded healer* offers clients intuition and empathy. The notion of Jung's 'the Shadow Self' has resonance with the *shadow-land* I have spoken of before in reference to both the Penwithen and Vita Nova projects. It also connects to Boal's 'cop- in- the head' and Freire's observations of the 'living corpses,' 'shadows' and 'invisible war' when referring to the oppression of the Brazilian peasants. (Freire, 1970:152)

Through the ritual of drama, we were trying to examine some the shadows or at least building on the other side of the personality, the lighter side, and affirming that we are subjects and not objects.

> Another crucial thing to ponder is that the shadow itself, due to the darkness that it forms and due to the distance that it creates from the physical body of a person, becomes something not so many people are eager to connect with. And this is one of the major ideas associated with the Jungian shadow. Although we usually see the shadow as an integral part of our existence, most of us are willfully blind to this existence.
> Our dark side is concealed or camouflaged in a painful attempt to protect an image that fits the narrative we decide to espouse. Through social conditioning, we come to construct a façade that can keep the substrate of our constructed identity stable so that we can keep feeling safe.
> Safety, however, is ill-defined in that space we inhabit. How can one feel safe when there is so much unknown territory out there that can at any given point in time convulse the foundations of our fragile constitution? A person is as free as their mind allows and if the mind creates barriers between the reality of the person and the reality of the rest of the world, delusion and neurosis could take over.
> (Iliopoulos, 2018: 9)

My path as a facilitator, who is a *wounded healer*, is to support others through applied drama, in turn to create more *wounded healers*. Vita Nova and, to a lesser extent, Penwithen were not only authentic because they were addicts or had gone through challenging times, but they were all wounded. Their wounds were acknowledged through the drama process and they in turn were able to self-heal and heal others.
In one of my regular Monday workshops, June 2019, with Vita Nova, I asked the group for their spontaneous response to the word *healing* and then they created a set of still images.

When I asked the group to say what they saw in each other's images, the word wounded came up several times.

I went over to Latvia several days before the boys. My trip was sponsored by the British Council. Part of the deal to obtain the funding was that I was to deliver a small series of workshops, based on the process I had used for Vita Nova and Penwithen, for teachers and other drama practitioners.

My memory of the flight over to Latvia is blurred. I had Muiruri, my five-year-old son, with me and we were travelling late at night. Another remarkable aspect of Inguna, the director of the Baltic Bell, was that not only was she unphased when I told her about the unusual makeup of the drama group but when I said I could only come if I could bring my son, she immediately accommodated the situation. She had been through a rough life-journey herself, so she understood about being a single parent. Flying to Latvia had been a rush. I felt unprepared, badly packed, and I was worrying because I wasn't sure if I had got it right about being met at the airport by Inguna. On the plane I realised I didn't even have a phone number or address. I just kept hoping she would be there. Thankfully she was and we headed somewhere close by for a little to eat and vodka!

Muiruri and I were to stay in accommodation that had been arranged by Inguna. It was a room in the seasonally evacuated university students' halls. We were several floors up. It was a Soviet-styled building, austere, and it felt as if Muiruri and I had been plunged into a scene from a Tarkovsky film. There was no one there or least we hoped not. The room was large and brown with utilitarian furniture, even though there were two single beds we felt safer sleeping in one. The communal bathroom was separate which meant leaving the room into the unknown. There was a dripping tap in the bathroom and the whole building seemed to creak, speak and eavesdrop. We couldn't have been in a more unfamiliar place.

Thankfully Inguna picked us up the next morning. I was so run down by the intense personal struggle that I broke out with a terrible cold sore and Muiruri from the room picked up some kind of rash. Happily, Inguna had organised girls from her theatre group to chaperone him while we spoke and ran workshops for theatre directors. I had told Inguna that he was passionate about trains. So, the girls took him to a derelict yard for old Soviet rusty trains. Muiruri loved it.

I was taken to give an interview at the radio station and to meet the British Council.

The British Council were very kind to us and after inspecting Muiruri's skin and seeing where we were housed, she invited us to stay with her. We agreed and ended up staying in a beautiful penthouse in the nice end of Riga. It could not have been more different. She said Muiruri was the first male allowed to stay in her apartment.

We met Inguna's mother in a slightly crumbling house, that in the past the Russians had forcibly requisitioned. Latvia on 4 May 1990 gained her independence, only twelve years before our arrival. Inguna's mother worried Muiruri might get captured as he was so lovely and different. We hardly saw anyone of colour in Riga, which for a capital city is quite surprising.

4.5 Bradley's aborted journey:

> The group arrived…. well nearly all the group. Bradley had had an accident on route and was not with us. (Coyne, 2002: 3)

In my *Report 2* this is the only reference I made to Bradley's absence. It was actually a huge event. I remember one of the boys at the airport saying he wasn't there and thinking first of all it was some kind of joke; but he really wasn't there. It was real. There had been some *play fighting* on the way to the airport and he had hurt or even broken his arm. I just can't remember which. Amidst the joy of their arrival, which was almost unbelievable, there was a shock of sadness that Bradley was missing. The boys were so absorbed with excitement that they had already adapted to his absence. I was really disappointed he wasn't with them. I suppose it was a miracle that six of them had made it, but I wanted all of them there.
The word *play fight* was a frequent visitor to the Penwithen vocabulary. The boys were always fighting and here was the consequence. One of their team was left in the UK while the others went to Latvia. Research around *play fighting* by Carolyn Dixon links this phenomenon to white working-class males where *mucking around* is almost endemic in everything that they do. Dixon explains:

> In contrast to 'real' fighting in school, …'play/fighting' is largely outside the binary of 'friend' - 'enemy' (Davies, 1984; Beynon, 1989). It does not directly threaten friendships, nor does it cement them. It rarely carries with it physically harmful intent. More often it is 'joking', the 'messing around' (Dixon, 1996: 151)

I had seen Bradley over the weeks in Bournemouth really grow in confidence. I was told he came from a *criminal family*. For him to have been in the project and to have stuck with it

was momentous. I remember, in particular, he loved the relaxation exercise; he had called it: "Paradise." I also recall he was very taken with Munch's picture *The Scream*.
I don't think I ever saw Bradley again. I have no recollection for that matter of any post-gathering with the boys, except for Nick who did a short period of work experience with me post-Latvia. Once, by chance at a conference, I saw David briefly who actually spoke about the Penwithen project. I believe Latvia was the very last part of the project for the lads. I don't know what Bradley felt about not making it to Latvia. I can only imagine. There was so much excitement about us going, the quickness in organising the trip heightened the sense of adventure. Had the tour in the UK been something and that was good enough for Bradley? Or did he feel let down by life… again? Had that regret stayed with him?
I know that their teachers, Jan and Eileen, went to great lengths to get everyone's paper-work together. One parent tore up their son's passport and they, undaunted, had sellotaped it back together. Raising the money to take the group was also a time-consuming process.

4.6 The group's journey:

Revisiting Report 2: it is pronounced what an impact the Latvian trip made on us.

4.6.1 1 Arrival:

> *Waiting at the airport there was a lot of anticipation. A group of girls from the Latvian youth theatre had arrived with flowers. The boys from Britain were greeted like celebrities. Flowers are something that I will always associate with Latvia. Flower stalls opened 24 hours a day. People giving and receiving flowers as part of everyday life, it added a touch of beauty to existence. When we performed at the festival the young men in the group received not just applause but flowers. Our image conscious boys received their bouquets graciously. Penwithen boys do not naturally convey that they may be flower material. But like so much of the trip there were constant surprises that confirm the importance of exposing people to other cultural experiences.* (Coyne, 2002:3)

Latvia was such a different country and unknown to the boys and virtually unknown to me. So, we didn't have any preconceptions, like we may have had going to the USA or France. We didn't really have any idea what it would be like. It was more about being invited to go somewhere…anywhere … an adventure. Riga compared to London was very relaxed. It was extremely clean and one of Inguna's friends told me this was a positive hangover from communist days, that the streets were kept very tidy and old women could be seen constantly sweeping and more impressively people didn't leave their rubbish around. We were also there at a special time, a huge cultural folk festival with dancing, stalls, flowers and we were fortunate it was sunny and warm. It felt as if we were on holiday.

The treatment of the Penwithen Boys by the Latvian delegation, as with all the guests as far as I could see, was with great generosity and kindness. More than this, we were made to feel like honoured guests. When I met the boys at the airport, they saw the girls with flowers and a Welcome to Latvia sign. They laughed, saying: "look that's for us." When I answered: "yes, it is," they were genuinely surprised. The effort to make them feel welcome was not lost on those boys. Here was a case where they were not being met with suspicion and an expectation they were going to mess things up. There was no pity involved. They were being met as representatives from the UK to an international festival.
They were somebodies; not difficult, angry, and excluded kids. They were young actors coming to the festival. The notion of *naming*, of people coming to understand their worth as Freire emphasizes as *subjects* not *objects* is emerging as a strong theme throughout this dissertation.

> …Just before our trip Nick said to me:
> *"*Our play is not really about love is it?...It's about hope." (*op. cit*: 3)

This was a very perceptive insight from Nick. Without hope, without a meaningful purpose it's hard to move forward. Depression and dislocation from society can create a hopeless situation.

> Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope. Hope is rooted in man's incompletion, from which they move out in constant search- a search, which can be carried out only in communion with others. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanisation resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. (Freire, 1970: 72)

Here Freire makes clear the weight that a state of hopelessness may have on people. It connects with the motif of the *shadow-land* that society allows so many people to slip into. Those rejected, shut out, by mainstream education. The Penwithen Boys, along with many other discarded groups, have not really been heard. Their wall of anger closed many opportunities for them, especially cultural ones. The dulling reality of running projects with the disaffected or social engagement projects is that over thirty years I have been working in the field, although we have created many great drama productions, politically very little has changed to improve the aspiration or the quality of life for so many people on the fringes of society. This was beautifully illustrated by Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake*. (2016) chronicling how a positive human being, due to a lack of understanding and empathy from the state, was led into utter despair. In an article from The *Political Quarterly* O'Brien looks at how *I,Daniel Blake:* 'invites deep reflection on the relationship between the individual and the

state, and, more particularly, on the role of administrative justice in restoring a re-imagined sense of citizenship' (O'Brien, 2017: 90). Not surprisingly the film attracted a polarised reaction to its portrayal of how society treats people who find themselves in need of state support. O'Brien goes on to view a profound moment in the film when Daniel Blake feeling unheard leaves a graffiti message on the job centre wall. He comments:

> Daniel Blake's manifesto is far from merely a cry for better 'customer care', less officious job-centre staff or more legal 'adjudication'. On the contrary, it should be read as a sustained plea for a re-imagined sense of 'citizenship', shorn of the trappings of consumerism and reinvested instead with a sense of civic pride and dignity… …
> I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user. I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar nor a thief. I am not a national insurance number, nor a blip on a screen. I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so. I don't tug the forelock but look my neighbour in the eye. I don't accept or seek charity. My name is Daniel Blake, I am a man, not a dog. As such, I demand my rights. I demand you treat me with respect. I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen, nothing more, nothing less. Thank you'. *(ibid:90)*

However, Freire also suggests that 'an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope' (Freire, 1970: 72). Nick in his words: 'Our play is not really about love is it? It's about hope,' is, I believe, beginning to see possibilities, to make sense of his situation. A form of praxis has occurred through his taking part in the play. He was then able to reflect on what had happened and become critically conscious.

4.6.2: The Opening of The Festival

> *The opening of the festival took place in a gilded building with painted ceiling and panelling. There was an amazing exhibition of folk dancing. …In fact, they began to believe they couldn't do it; they could not perform, they were not good enough, their play was too different and it wasn't the right thing. …*
>
> *They pulled themselves together. They were going to go for it. There was to be no half-way. They performed with real confidence… The applause told them all they needed to know. It was another step on the road to self-belief*. (Coyne, 2002:15)

We took a real risk in taking the group to Latvia. Not just because of their behaviour which taking into account the incident with Bradley, the whole venture could have gone horribly wrong. It feels in retrospect that Bradley may have been some kind of sacrificial lamb. The reality of losing out on the trip was palpable after that incident and no other *play fighting* took place.

The mission was also a risk with the material we had made; a teenage play and perhaps a very English play, delivered by young people on the edge of society. If I had examined the programme before we went, I might have felt that we were going to be totally out of step with the rest of the festival. The items included a piece based on Astrid Lindgren stories, *Tales about Mother* by Hans Christian Anderson and *The Proposal* and *Bear* by Chekhov. Latvia was alien to us. Our play was alien to the rest of the festival.

The festival opening occurred in the Cultural Centre Maza Gilde, a beautiful medieval hall and the boys firstly watched Latvian children folk dancing. They were breath-taking. They came into the space and owned it. Little children dressed in traditional costume; some looked as young as five. They were drilled and disciplined. This dance display intimidated the lads from home. The three cooler boys who were going to do a short excerpt, Darren, Nick and Dan, suddenly became very small children and they refused to go on, embarrassed that their piece was not good enough.

At this particular moment, after all the trouble of getting there, I tried to get them to remember how good they were. In the end I pushed Darren onto the stage and the boys started their rap and Dan ended his piece with a somersault. Everyone clapped loudly. They couldn't believe it. The girls thought they were great and suddenly they were walking tall.

The opening of The Baltic Festival 2002 at Maza Gilde, Darren, Dan and Nick.

4.6.3 The Festival

> The actual festival took place in an old traditional theatre. Our play was fairly late into the afternoon…
> Before our play the group rehearsed in a very focused and productive way. There were not any put downs they had learnt over the weeks; that results come through encouragement not negativity. That rehearsal in a very different theatre and different country was a clear coming together of the group, instead of complaints there was an attitude of getting it right and working as a team. Graham stepped in for Bradley. The group supported him well. The actual performance was excellent their timing and audibility were particularly strong. There was also a remarkable moment when one of the group forgot exactly when to come on and as a team they worked through this potentially difficult moment and made it into part of the play. This showed how their quick wits which in the past have all too often been used in a subversive way were able to bring vitality and creativity under pressure.
> The discussion after the play was excellent and a new experience for the audience, who were visibly moved by the words of the group. In the director's meeting after the festival, it was something that was picked up and something they would like to use for other groups. *(ibid*: 15)

It was in a foreign place, a heterotopia, where the group learnt to tolerate each other and work closely as a team. Dialogues happened at every level. There were discussions and relationships with other young people from Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark and Sweden. There was also a lot of flirting and *chatting up* went on. These were sophisticated girls, members of youth theatres, and the boys had to up their game and actually make conversation. There was almost a barrage of cultural experiences. As guests there were also excursions, including a trip to a wood and the seaside. Once more the boys who were not really interested in nature found themselves plunged into beautiful natural environments.
The bringing of my five-year-old son Muiruri had been a worry to me, but it turned out to be another opportunity. Here the boys stepped up and wanted to play with him and carry him on their shoulders. He loved the attention. Nick who had used such racist language back in Bournemouth was the one who gave him the most time and attention. He loved him.
In Latvia they had the chance to be the best people they could be.

When I was an undergrad at Exeter my lecturer, John Somers, among many other things said that drama was a *passport*; not only physically, taking one to various parts of the world but emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Drama offers a virtual place to travel into a philosophical world that asks fundamental life questions. It also can take the participant and the audience into other worlds. We had in Latvia a passport, through drama, to empathise, to practise compassion, to question and to take real action outside and inside of that *magic space*.

4.6.4 Last day

> On the last day we watched plays and folk dancing. David and I joined in as the rest watched. If anyone *had said that the group … as part of the project we're to go and watch some Morris dancing they would have probably told them where to get off. But there they were, sitting in a row with Muiruri watching the dancing and being moved by a patriotic song.*
>
> *It was very quiet on the bus*
> *David: "I'm just savouring the moment."*
>
> *I believe those moments will remain in our minds for a long time*
>
> (*ibid*: 16)

We all knew it was something special. There was a sense that nobody wanted to return home. Nothing lasts forever … or does it as a deep imprint, a friendly scar maybe for the rest of our lives?

Latvia 2002

The drama group with their new friends in Latvia.

Eileen Clews, Teacher, and Inguna Gremze festival Director

Latvian youth theatre guide Inga Baibakova at the Midsummer celebrations

Chapter 5: The Lost Boys and Two Guides
Part One: The Lost Boys 17 years and more later …

Main studio at the BCCA. Rehearsal with the Penwithen boys - left to right Nathan, Nick, Dan and Kieran

Photograph: 2002 ©Martin Coyne

5.1 Part 1 Interviews with the Penwithen Boys

My work with BTIE allowed me the freedom to be myself. We were not constrained by a tight regime. Likewise, Eileen Clews, their teacher, was able to pursue her idea that working with me and Vita Nova mentors would be a good plan because their school was not restricted by a rigid curriculum. The school and the TIE team had a certain flexibility that was responsive and spontaneous to ideas. There was no planned-out strategy for the project. This was a professional, mature teacher who knew her young people, who used her intelligence and her intuition to know, after seeing Vita Nova's *Scratchin' the Surface,* that our approach was something that could work for her boys. She said to me: 'I want them to have the same experience'. She spoke like a parent who wants the best for their children.

I feel increasingly that there is less scope within educational institutions for spontaneity, as everything is dominated by results and ratings. There was not going to be a qualification at the end of the Penwithen Project. We weren't even sure what the end of the project would look like, only that we were going to make a play.

What Eileen, their teacher, demonstrated was hope. She was looking for creative ways to bring out their potential. Freire talks a great deal about the notion of hope in *Pedagogy of Freedom*. He points out its huge importance: '… as human beings, one of our struggles should be to diminish the objective reasons for that hopelessness that immobilises us.' (Freire, 1998: 68). He calls it *Critical Hope*. Freire describes a desperate social situation in Brazil with his colleague, and questions what can be done to change the circumstances:

> We seemed to be trampling on human sorrow as we talked about the different kinds of problems peculiar to this place. What can we possibly do, as educators, working in a context like this? Is there something we can do? And how can we do it? (*ibid:* 70)

He continues:

> I have a right to be angry, to show it and to use it as a motivational foundation for my struggle, just as I have a right to love and to express my love to the world and to use it as a motivational foundation for my struggle because I live in history at a time of possibility and not determinism (*ibid*: 71).

Eileen recognised the trauma that the boys had encountered, often telling me that some of the boys' backgrounds were heart-breaking. She looked beyond their desperate human sorrow and instead engaged in positive action. She was determined to do something to make the project work, firstly by getting them physically to the BCCA Boscombe and secondly, enabling the trip to Latvia. I view Eileen with deep admiration. I placed my reflections about Eileen at the beginning of this chapter, as a reminder of what the essence of the Penwithen Boys project came to be based on— hope.

Finding and interviewing the Boys:

The dream of finding the boys has been in my mind for such a long time. I had procrastinated about the actual doing, because deep down it seemed so hard to think about how I might find them all. The lost boys. Finally, I started with the easy option, Darren, the non Penwithen pupil. I knew that Darren still lived in the neighbourhood. However, before

interviewing Darren a strange coincidence occurred. Dan appeared on my doorstep delivering a cooker! My husband Martin, the photographer who had taken the boys' portraits in 2002, recognised him as he entered our home. Martin kept thinking he had seen him before and then said: 'did you go to Penwithen School?' He replied: 'yes' and Martin phoned me immediately and took his details so that I could contact him. Life is strange. Jung would describe this I think as *synchronicity*. Dan walking across the threshold of our home was pretty unbelievable and important in the quest of discovering the Penwithen Boys. After contacting Dan, I then held his details for a while, as I wanted to talk to Darren first.

As stated in Chapter 2 I used open-ended narrative interviews. (*See 2.4.1 p67 &2.4.2 p69 My framework for the interviews)*

I present here, five interpretive case studies that I have named ***Life- Sketches.*** These sketches are based on the participants' recollections of the Penwithen Project in 2001/2.
I began, each interview by saying:

> *…I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story. All the events and experiences which are important to you, and you can start whenever and wherever you like. It doesn't matter about the sequence, and I'm just going to listen, and take some notes.*

Jordi Robert (2.4.2) the original cameraman filmed all the interviews. He was with the project from the very beginning in 2001/2. Having him recording the interviews was important, as he understands the significance of the research.
In all cases except for Jan Morgan the interviews were held at Vita Nova's premises in Boscombe.

I begin, by focusing on the three Penwithen Boys, now men, with a reflection after each individual Life-sketch and conclude with meditations linking the three narratives.
I then shift to Inguna Gremze and Jan Morgan following on the same pattern.

5.1.1 Life-Sketch Darren

First interview: Non Penwithen Boy 'Young Darren'

2001 Darren. Photograph: ©Martin Coyne

2018 Sharon and Darren. Photograph: ©Jordi Robert

Context:

Through working at the Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts (BCCA) as part of the Bournemouth Theatre in Education team (BTIE), the Council knew our work with Vita Nova and young people who were excluded from mainstream education. I'd had a student who had been sent from a local Emotional Behavioural Problem (EBP) school on long-term work experience. This had been successful with the student in question, a school absconder who ironically ended up attending his school once a week as my helper, to work with a group of young students, one being his brother. As a result of family issues, the boys had been separated and were living in different foster care homes. It was set up to be a short stay with BTIE but somehow it turned out to be a long-term placement. A similar situation appeared with Darren.

Life-sketch of Darren's Penwithen Story:

'…the lines maybe got a little bit blurred … … I don't think I'd ever heard of Latvia before….'

Darren is a married 31-year-old father of two girls and is housing manager of a 22-bed hostel for rough sleepers. He lives locally. At 13 years old, he came to the TIE team from a school that, at the time, had a poor reputation, on what was loosely described as work experience. The phone call consisted of someone saying words to the effect that Darren liked drama; he had been a problematic pupil, could we have him for two weeks? Basically, he never returned to school. Rather than exclude Darren, they tried to offer him an alternative. It began with Darren splitting his placement between BTIE and a local garage. With time it became just BTIE. He became my helper to work with young people, not unlike himself, from a variety of settings. He was also involved in some of the theatre in education work and he had some dealings with Vita Nova who were very kind towards him. He was able to be fully involved with the Penwithen Boys project as it occurred during his stay with us in 2001. The Penwithen Boys all had educational statements. Darren did not. All the lads had a criminal record as did Darren. Unlike the Penwithen Boys I have never completely lost touch with him.

Although being loosely in contact with Darren, neither Jordi nor myself had had a proper conversation with him for many years. However, rereading this section I have remembered something about Darren, and I am stating this because memory is such an interesting force.

Somehow, I and maybe Darren, have blotted out quite a big incident, which would have happened maybe in 2004. After Darren had left the BCCA at 16 he started a Performing Arts, two-year National diploma at an FE college where he gained a distinction. However, in 2004 I received a phone call out of the blue from the police station saying that Darren was held there, and he didn't want to go home but had requested that he stayed with me. I cannot recall how he got to my parents' home, as by then Muiruri and I were living with them. My Dad was very unwell. Somehow Darren came and stayed on a camp bed for a few days while he sorted himself out. But still this was a long time ago.

When Darren met Jordi and me on 17th of February 2018 for the interview, there was an acknowledgement of a past relationship, which differs from the rest of the boys I was to interview. Although not a Penwithen Boy, he was like them in as much that he had been excluded from school and was the same age and gender. He was an outsider to the other boys, at least to begin with. His role at the start of the project was as my helper. When the boys arrived in their bus he was there with Jordi, me and the other mentors from Vita Nova. We conducted our interview at Vita Nova[34]. Darren sits down. He is in the spot-light literally as Jordi is filming in the studio which is painted black. So, besides the light for the camera, it is dark. I look at Darren who is now a man of 31 years; his eyes still have the sparkle I remember when he was a teenager. Darren has very dark eyes inherited from his estranged father who originated from Malta.

I could tell Darren was quite excited to be with Jordi and me, but became a little taken-a-back when I explained I was going to ask him just one question.

'I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story'

The wait for Darren to get going was visibly awkward. I could almost hear him grappling with the past and struggling to find a language, a vocabulary, with which to express himself. He was almost pleading with me for a bit of support. Then after a few "ers" and "you knows" - he began. He started his story by stating his role:

[34] Vita Nova: creative arts centre for those in recovery **11** Roumelia Lane, Boscombe, Bournemouth BH5 1EU

> "So, I think like, first of all… I remember it being a bit, it was a little strange for me because I had obviously been working with you already, you know, and, so I was there in that capacity being helpful and ... you know, doing what I did for you anyway".

Firstly, he expressed that the situation with the other teenage boys was: "strange for him." When later asked to reflect on this he said:

> "…the lines maybe got a little bit blurred in a way, … I suppose you-- even in being part of that I was still a little bit separate because I, I wasn't with them at their school and stuff like that, do you know what I mean? [tuts] … for me personally being the same age as them, I found it easy to get sucked into, maybe what they were doing, you know. Not, not even necessarily bad things or anything like that."

Darren grapples with his positioning that even though he is part of the drama group he is also separate, outside, as he doesn't go to their school or any school. He almost justifies himself when he says: "not even necessarily bad things," as if there was an assumption that may be the case. Darren, when looking back, has completely taken on his given role with the Theatre in Education team as being a helper. The way he uses the word *capacity* gives his role weight. It was important to him. He explains it further by saying: "doing what I did for you." He had a purpose. He also uses the word *our*. So, there is a sense of equality even though he would have been between 14 and 15 years old at the time. Subsequent probing about being *helpful to me* revealed his rational and almost throw-away understatement about his education.

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> "… wasn't really very welcome in school. And so instead of going to school I, I just … I came, to work with you, basically. And then, uh, obviously did lots and lots of different projects."

Darren is constantly looking for some kind of affirmation and says: "you know," repeatedly throughout his responses. The phrase also suggests a mutual agreement and understanding about his situation, his place in the story. This is also an acknowledgment that I am not only the interviewer but also very much part of his life back then. He begins to note the significance of working with those who are the same age as him. He recognises that there were parallels between himself and the Penwithen Boys as his peers. He leans back when he starts to remember the story. "… I was probably in the same place as most of the guys that were there, and I was the same age." Darren explains that the Penwithen project, unlike others with the TIE team, was "the first time working in his own peer group for a while*."* He goes on to reminisce about the workshops with the other boys.

> "…[pause leans back and smiles] I remember um … I'm pretty sure it was a Wednesday… and it was, you know, it was certainly in the beginning, it was, you know, it was very crazy."

Asked to elaborate on the *crazy Wednesdays*, Darren shifts from talking about being with me as a helper to *you* being the drama group, he was becoming part of and then *you* to *we're*. Darren repeats the words *invested* and *ownership* when talking about the project. There is an acknowledgment of how the drama became important to him and the other boys. That a change of behaviour took place from *just messing about* to an ownership and investment in the drama project that enabled creativity and led to … "OK, we're here to work now." It appears that Darren and the group grasped the idea that the project was an *opportunity*; that only through participating, doing, did they get to grips with what they were making and as a consequence became committed to it.

> " in the early days, … it was quite a difficult group dynamic, 'cause it … was like new and exciting and whatever, and, and like the other lads were allowed out, or going to do stuff … … in the early days and I-- you didn't really know what was going on. [Sighs]… … you hadn't taken ownership of the project yet, …it wasn't like a thing you were, like invested in…so I suppose for the first few weeks …it was just a mess about … … as the weeks went on … you had wanted, like invested, into it… … their creativeness… … their time and just taken ownership and kind of become like oh OK, we're here to work now. You know, we're here 'cause we want to do this project, it's not just like fun time or whatever. Although it was fun, but, … almost realised the opportunity of what you were doing."

A strong recollection for Darren was another aspect of the *crazy Wednesdays. At* the end of the day was the relaxation exercise which he dubs: "a guided vision thing,";

> "… you're lie down, you're quiet and imagine being on an island and you can feel the sun all coming down your face, you know, all that. I used to love that. I remember loving that… it was just like peace and quiet."

He further articulates the enjoyment of the exercise hinting about his past life outside of the centre as being: "quite hectic." He alludes to another existence beyond the project: *"*whatever we were up to outside of… of that project,*"* and that: *"*moments of peace and quiet and stillness, were kind of few and far between." Relaxation work he confided was something that he returned to later as an adult:

> *"*…it came up, later on in life, to… I remember being quite excited. Being like, oh yeah, I've done this before and it was, uh, it's really nice, it's really good. Get involved.*"*

The time being in a rehabilitation centre when he was 18 years in 2004. The actual drama project Darren describes as *real* and he uses references to the youth culture of 2001/2 hip-hop and rap. At the time Eminem's (2002) *Lose Yourself* was beating out. The lads chose that track for the opening of their play. Darren expresses a sense of freedom in the drama process being: "able to write and stuff." He also points out it was "cool." He owns some of the creativity regarding their rap in the play: "I wrote most of the stuff." There is a sense of pride and achievement at this point in his gestalt narrative:

> *"… [*pause*]* the kind of actual project… the whole like, what we were doing at the time was very real, because that was where we were all at the time. You know? I was really …into hip-hop and really into rap and … so was everyone else there…So, getting, like being able to write and stuff.*"*

Darren elaborates on the notion of *real* - that their play "the actual premise of the performance…it was just about real people. It was about characters that…we thought represented us and our life." He talks philosophically about the process of writing:

> *"…* writing the music, writing the hip hop, writing the lyrics, all that … I think, when--especially when you write-- like anyone who writes songs, uh, they're writing from the place that they're in*."*

He alludes to the fact that at the Latvian festival the lads were *different* from the other participants, visually inhabiting the cultural clothes of rap and hip-hop:

> "We were there with ridiculously oversized chains, and beanie hats and baggy jeans and, smoking whilst the performances at the festival had a more *classical* feel, and white paint, and all in black."

Although he describes them in hindsight as "ridiculous," contradictorily he expresses a certain pride in that difference: *"*that's where we were." Darren suggests that what the Penwithen Boys were doing was more important than the other participants at the festival: "I'm not diminishing the importance of, of anyone else's [perfomances]… but for us it was, it was a different project."

Darren continues to describe the trip to The Baltic Festival of Love. When he talks about Latvia, it is intense, emotional. He has a physical response to the memory. His hand goes to his heart:

> To be honest my [hand on heart] main memories, really, like, are of going to Latvia. But I'm aware that's kind of the end of the whole journey in a sense. Do I talk about Latvia? [I nod and there is laughter]."

Darren laughs at this point of the telling, as if we are part of a conspiracy. He thinks for a moment and is then able to talk about the project pre-Latvia. He is arranging his own story. Recalling the commitment of the Penwithen teachers, the proud response from them and family to the performance Til*' It all Went Wrong*. Darren described the play as being a real success:

> "…for the guys what it meant to them and their parents and their families … I vividly remember you know the mums and also like you know, TAs and the teachers how kind of emotionally involved they were with these young people, that doesn't sound right but, like, how proud they were … just how overjoyed they were to see the progression of the whole group… Like putting on their first performance and things like that."

As an adult Darren is recollecting and describing his dual position as a peer and also a helper. He is evoking this phenomenon as an observer, of the Penwithen boys' progression, not as a participant. He later expands on this reaction from audiences close to the boys, whilst simultaneously reflecting on how it feels to be a teenager. He displays an understanding of the teachers and support staffs' roles as being vocational, whilst pointing out why the boys' achievement was particularly important to them: "just a very proud moment of, you know, they'd probably been, sworn at a lot by the young people." His assumptions come with a certain knowledge about adolescent boys' behaviour: "I think when you're -- especially teenagers, everything's so raw innit, so -- everything's so dramatic. Like naturally in life, like everything's so …shouty and, and loud … not for every teenager, but certainly for maybe that group*."*

Darren when reminiscing is struck by the repercussions of the boys' success. Through his narrative portrayal he unfolds a consciousness about the struggles of teenagers and that particular group. He conveys the extent of their accomplishments in describing key aspects of the drama process: "coming together and that discipline, and then: 'it's just achieving something." Once more, he references the *achievement* of the project. Identifying with the sense of "worthlessness" that young people can feel. He talks of "them," as a form of distancing. Young people feeling "a bit like they can't really get anything right, especially if they're having problems at school, they're having problems at home ... It's not easy being a teenager is it?" He could be talking about himself. Then he returns to what was, for him, the "kind of biggest memory," the trip to Latvia. For the Latvian part of his story, he adopts a higher level of energy and excitement: "going to Latvia, and going to perform at the festival

there… … and just how good a time that was." He again paints a holistic picture of the event and the importance of being in the group; what he calls a "cohort."

> "It's like a journey from the start to finish and I think when you start something with people and end something with people… there is something very special about that. … like I still, speak to one or two guys. Well one guy, you know… You know it's a memory like we have kind of got together."

Darren begins to struggle with his words, trying to find the right ones to describe his experience. What is clear was "how good a time that was." He uses the word cohort to refer to the group. He is part of something. They went through something together. It's a bond. He sums up the group's involvement in the project as a "shared experience." The completion of something from "start to finish," has deep relevance for him. Through his narrative, Darren offers a window into how, as a teenager, he dealt with situations, saying he "used to sabotage quite a lot of good stuff by maybe my behaviour." His stress on the importance of completion is conveyed as a gestalt experience: "…. to achieve something and finish it. And it, it be wrapped up, on a good note, on a positive note, ... is a nice reminder of achievement."

When talking about Latvia, Darren is passionate: "… it's like it's one of those places that I have to go back to before I die." He puts his hand on his heart again when talking about Latvia. He uses very strong words: "before I die." He wants to "relive it almost," that experience. He expresses a longing to return whilst fully understanding that it will not be the same. Darren emphasises the collective aspect of the drama project that in turn becomes a unifying memory. He acknowledges Jordi and my being part of it: "even you guys, I shared that experience with you and here we are today…years later, sitting talking about it." Darren has thought about revisiting Latvia frequently. He has spoken to his wife about it. His repetition of *always* heightens his desire to return. He also wonders if his love of the country is due to that particular time: "maybe I'd go now and not live in that experience and completely hate it and think - ah this city's terrible or whatever." Darren expands on his desire to return to Riga, describing a strong sense of place:

> "I've always [inhales] said about how much of an amazing place it is … I've always found myself being quite excited whenever someone says … I've been to Riga I was like, oh yeah, it's amazing innit [Laughs]…I'd really like to go back… I say to my wife quite often… I'd love, I'd love to go for… just go for a weekend or something."

Darren returns again to the entirety of the trip with an exuberance. Describing their drama group as "obviously we were very different" from the other young people at the festival. The

use of *obviously* emphasises their sense of their being outside the norm, whilst demonstrating Darren's self-awareness and, almost, pride regarding their situation. Darren recounts a spontaneous rap-battling session in an evocative, humorous manner:

> "… one day we went for a walk. And there were like some guys. And they were like basically battling, rap-battling in a basement. And, ah, we just kind of went and had a battle with these lads. Like they didn't rhyme in English or anything and we obviously didn't rhyme in Latvian whatever, but it was you know just cool grimy basement live music … there were people drumming like… it wasn't just a tape and a mike. Like live music and just having a battle with this random hip-hop crew. Obviously, we won.*"*

Throughout this recollection Darren is referring to the incident as fun, great, it being *cool.* Darren presents this episode with one of the Penwithen lads encountering Latvian sub-culture with joy, where they spoke the same musical language. There is humour over the hip–hop memory and a re-use of the word obviously … "Obviously we won." Darren and Nick were confident in communicating with strangers through music.

He develops further the idea of their difference to the other drama groups at the festival. There is an element of pride. Their group looked and sounded different*.* But Darren conveys a self-acknowledgment, a confidence in the strength of the play they had to offer the festival. He also revealed more about himself as a young lad, philosophising once more about being a teenager: "I suppose just as a teenager you always feel a bit different anyway don't you, and a bit disjointed and a bit like, no one understands." He discusses that, although the group *felt* distinctive from the other festival participants, he didn't think it "*w*as like a bad thing … it was like a good thing*."* The reason Darren offers for this is that they really: "believed in that piece*,"* they had created as it held an importance, so it didn't matter that other people were "doing these classic pieces." Darren astutely and confidently commented: "we had as much right to be there as anyone else*.'*

There is an acceptance that not only did the group stand out but something extraordinary had happened in their going to the festival. That there had been risk involved within the project, but the group had been trusted.

> *"*…it's even more special if you look at like the group of lads that went over, and the organisation of it… how many other people… would've taken a group of lads excluded from mainstream school, to go and perform at a theatre festival... trusted them to, to carry it out."

Darren continued his story by recollections of the dorms they stayed in whilst in Latvia. Staying together was important for Darren who describes himself as being a bit of a loner. But here he was a teenager having "teenager experiences". He uses the word grateful, as if the project gave him back part of his childhood. He reveals a great deal about himself at that time. The memory again has a physical effect on him. He places his hand on his heart as he relives himself as the teenage boy:

> [Long Pause] "Like staying in the dorms and all that. I think for me personally [hand on heart], you know, I suppose I had been a kind of loner in a way, you know, I left school at such a young age. And … I didn't really have a lot of peers my age, you know, I knew a lot of people I used to bounce from group to group, person to person … it was nice to go through something with people my age, have some kind of friendship, and have just like teenage experiences. … because I think personally like [hand on heart] you know for myself I wasn't having teenager experiences as a teenager I was having older people's experiences as a teenager. So, when I look back now, I am grateful for having teenage experiences as a teenager…"

He further explained how the drama group away from home managed to get on well together:

> *"…*just being with your pals at the time… and I don't remember people not getting on … I don't remember anyone being bullied, I don't remember, you know, anyone really being, out of line*."*

His memory of the trip being fun had deep overtones for him and is mixed with a humorous recollection of their coming out of their cultural comfort zones. In particular, he mentions breakfast in Latvia: "the lads never really ate anything 'cause it was like, boiled eggs and meat and bread. You know, they were wondering where the Coco Pops were*."* Darren returns to his lack of mixing with his peers and being outside of school. His narration then links to his adult life … *"*I see people now and they're friends with people they went through school with and they go to their weddings and all that." He expresses a form of relief in being part of the drama group:

> *"*kind of have a group of people and do something with a group of people my own age was, was good, was good for me personally, when I think about Latvia… I remember how good it was."

When asked further about *having a teenage experience,* in the second section of the interview, there is a shift of mood. Here Darren asked to stop the interview for a while as we had touched on something in his past. I reassured Darren that the interviewing process will enable him to cut anything he doesn't want on film or recorded on paper and that he only

needs to say what he feels comfortable with. Darren resumes his story, alluding to the impact of school exclusion and living a double life. There is a sense of shame in his words. He recognises the dichotomy of his work at the arts centre and life outside:

> *"*…at that time in my life, I didn't have a lot of peers my own age because … I wasn't in mainstream education... So, the majority of my time was spent with, with older people really… … I lived on an estate where...a lot of people didn't do a lot. So, there is, blurred lines between...age groups … … I was interested in a lot of things. Which weren't necessarily healthy for me, or good for me… my life was quite-- things were very chaotic, for me personally. ... I'd come and work with you in the week and I'd do, really great stuff. And then I'd go home and things weren't so great."

Darren's narrative returns to Latvia along with his energy. He expresses excitement that the boys were stimulated by the experience. Their misconceptions of unknown Latvia; "well Latvia is like near Russia and Russia is cold so it's going to be freezing," were linked into a vague understanding of the bigger world beyond Dorset. Latvia in 2002 - was still in a prolonged honeymoon from her independence in 1990. The boys packed for cold weather, encountered young people from other countries:

> "…getting there and it was absolutely roasting, it was like [laughing] summer, it was June… it was like...25º everyday [more laughter] … I thought I don't know… we were going to Siberia or somewhere like that [Pause]…. It was just cool. Like it was cool I suppose because it was like the festival… people from all around the Baltic State areas Lithuania Slovakia, so many different groups of people there."

As he reminisces, he talks about making friends with the Latvians and that he is still friends with one girl via Facebook. There is bravado in the way he speaks. Darren repeatedly speaks of how cool the experience was and how fun it was. Darren expresses an adolescent obsession when talking about the Latvian girls and becoming a little euphoric when remembering the slightly prohibited side of things: "Cheap cigarettes …can I say cheap beer and lots of girls? It was fairly fun times*."* The cultural reference to football is strong for him and there is humour when he remembers as a Manchester United fan having to wear the wrong football shirt, a Tottenham shirt, as a result of a drinking game where someone had*: "*spilt a drink*."* It ended in them having a publicity photograph in a museum for the festival: "there was a picture taken of me with a Tottenham shirt and that picture was the one that went like into, all the national press … I've got to live with that …"

There was a holiday feel about the trip 'a break from life' that is tangled up with part of Darren's adolescence. Darren recalls the performances. He remembers their little pre-performances, a scene that took place in this "big fancy town hall, the Cultural Centre Maza

Gilde, where there were "like mayors." When talking about the excerpt they performed he remembers a mistake: *"…*I remember it going quite well…wasn't someone doing like … a backflip… Didn't he stack it or something? I've got a feeling he fell over or something like that [Laughs]." Here Darren comments on the difficulty of change as it can: "really throw a bunch [claps hands] of young people off.*"* They were in the town hall just giving a short preview, which wasn't how they had rehearsed. He then moves to the full performance.

> *"…*the proper performance at the festival, I do remember having to sit through everyone else's performances during the day, which was quite long especially if you didn't understand the language."

Although he reports that he struggles to remember their actual performance what remains is an emotional memory. He expresses his love for performance although he would struggle with nerves beforehand:

> *"*every single time I ever performed, on stage or whatever. You know I always loved it, I always buzzed off it, …I always felt great from it, …And I was always really nervous before…, I suffer quite bad nerves, you know, which surprises some people sometimes*..."*

He remembers clearly the congratulations, affirmation they received and their sense of real pride in what they did:

> *"…* remember how congratulated we were on it. By all the other groups… [the play] being very celebrated by other people…I don't know what people were expecting… we sort of, we smashed it… I think we surprised people, in how good it was."

Reflections and key concepts:

My overriding sensation after my interview with Darren was one of sadness. It is important to be aware of the dichotomy of myself as interviewer but also having been the facilitator within the project. There is no doubt of the significance of this, as Darren's language is one of an understood mutual experience. His constant use of "you know" was recognition of that positioning. However, unexpectedly, the interview revealed to me another part of Darren I had not fully understood or known, his deep vulnerability and loneliness. How being my helper and in particular belonging to the drama group had been vastly significant in giving the younger Darren, who was confused about his place in society, an identity and a sense of achievement and pride.

His story was one of inner conflict, where at times lines were blurred. There was his role as my helper whilst at the same time being a participant in the Penwithen project, which he grappled to explain. Then there was a blurring of lines with the revelation that to an extent he had been leading a double life. There was Darren my work experience student; life at the centre as my helper and the shadowy, more adult life that he hints was far from healthy. There is shame and confusion shrouding this other shadowy adult life. Darren had hankered for peer friendship. The Penwithen Boys project offered him the possibility of working with people his own age which was deeply important for Darren. Having the opportunity to engage with young lads his age somehow fulfilled a social norm that had left him feeling a sense of failure: "I didn't have those kinds of friendships." The damage of being excluded from mainstream education is summed up in his comment about school: "I wasn't really very welcome in school." There is still a feeling of lingering pain, isolation and confusion around that period of Darren's life.

Being part of the drama cohort and being a part of a common endeavour is a vital element of his story. He was able to create a piece of theatre that was both real and relevant, with this group of people who were, like himself, outsiders. The shift from the crazy Wednesday drama workshops moved into working seriously for something they believed in, they invested in the story that was a reflection of their own lives - a realisation that alongside the fun was the necessity to commitment to the project. That the project, was regarded by the boys as cool meant they could be fully involved without losing face.
He alluded again to a chaotic life as a teenager when speaking of the relaxation elements of the workshops. Allowing him: "moments of peace and quiet" in an unsettled existence. Relaxation work is something Darren has encountered in later life and because of experience as a teenager, he welcomed it.

The sense of completion, pride and achievement regarding the making of their play and performing it is stated repeatedly. Darren displays an internal assimilation at the fulfilment of *'Til It All Went Wrong* which was important as he often had "sabotaged good stuff." The finality of making the piece brought real rewards. He realised how proud the friends, families, teachers, support workers and those who-cared for them were to see the boys succeeding. Those who were often the butt of the young people's anger. He talks about this for the Penwithen Boys but there is recognition of his own teenage behaviour within his words. There is also an admission of the risks those same adults took for them. When recalling the turbulence of being a teenager there appears to be a form of transference. He

is talking about this subject generally but there is an implication that he is making sense of that experience for himself.

The group knew they were unlike the rest of the Baltic Bell participants, but there was also a pride in this assumption. They had found a language for their adolescence, being able to incorporate the clothes, language and music into their piece. As a cohort their difference became positive. There was a feeling of pride generated rather than feeling like aliens. The sense of achievement in their theatre piece meant that they did not give sway to insecurity. Seeing the others' polished classical pieces at the festival had not put them off, because they were delivering something strong. Darren says clearly: "We had as much right to be there as anyone else." There is a real confidence in this statement.

The impact of being in an unknown country had a profound effect. The pressure was off. Darren conveyed a gestalt experience, an exuberance, a delight in his telling of the Latvian part of the story – the whole thing, the dorms in particular, meeting people from other countries experiencing new cultures. The passion he felt at being in a distinctive environment physically, allowed him and the group in turn, to inhabit another space mentally. The drama group all getting on together being part of that project still remains. There is a yearning for Darren to return to Latvia, to that place, to that time where things worked. A sense almost of hiraeth. There they were successful. Satisfaction in their play that was offered to the festival. *'Til It All Went Wrong* allowed them to behave in alternative ways, to able to talk to people from other places, to chat up girls and rap with strangers. There they were confident.

Through the participation in the whole project in Boscombe and Latvia, Darren regained a part of a lost childhood that had been muddied by adult experiences.

> *"*So, when I look back now, I am grateful for having teenage experiences as a teenager."

5.1.2 Life Sketch Dan

Second interview: Dan Penwithen Boy

Dan 2001 Photograph: ©Martin Coyne

Dan 2018 Photograph: ©Jordi Robert.

Context:

Dan was at Penwithen School and during the week he lived in the hostel there. After leaving school he went into the army as many of the boys from Penwithen did, Bovington army camp being close to their school. He now works in an electrical shop in Boscombe. He lives with his partner and they have several children.

On May 24th 2018 Jordi and I waited for Dan in the small Iceland car park next to Vita Nova. It was early evening and I felt a mixture of nervousness and excitement, as I had not seen Dan since 2002, so sixteen years had lapsed. When he got out of his car, although now a man, there was that same energy and exuberance that I remember about him from when he was a teenager.

As with Darren I explained the interview process carefully leading to the fact that in the first section I would ask Dan just one question.

Life Sketch – Dan:

> *"…*I don't think we actually realised it was the actual Baltic Festival of Love. Until you actually told us when we were going, because you might have got a different response. The festival is all about Love - oh well, we don't want to go there. We flew out to Latvia, umm, it was a different world."

After listening to the question: "I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story",
Dan begins his story by firstly talking about his experience at the actual school of Penwithen. He uses almost institutionalised language when he says accommodate. As he explains how he would stay at the hostel at the Penwithen School during the week, returning to foster parents in Boscombe for the weekends. He paused before he said: "It was umm a difficult school, umm obviously there were a lot of people with a range of different problems and abilities and what not."

He then positioned himself within that mix. In doing so he layers the explanations of his previous 15-year-old self: "I had an anger issue I would say, ...attention problem, no I was very boisterous," there is self-knowledge in his remark when he adds that he was: "really difficult to cope with." He concludes his list of his perceived faults by stating he had: "undiagnosed ADHD[1] is probably the best way to explain it". In hindsight, Dan is able to acknowledge that:

> "Penwithen helped, it was really good, even though at the time I probably didn't think it was, looking back on it now, it's probably a massive part of who I am today, the people there helped sooo much…"

Dan reveals conflicting emotions and a sense of displacement as he contemplates his situation:

> "…it was strange, weird, driving all the way to Dorchester on a Monday to go to school. I kind of looked forward to it, enjoyed going to school, I just didn't enjoy being *at* school. It was really weird. "

He displays puzzlement at the very long trip from Bournemouth to Weymouth. A distance of over 35 miles in a taxi. Dan completes this phase of the story by countering what he has said about his school, by saying: "So it was good, I enjoyed Penwithen." Dan's narrative then moves onto the drama project. He states:

> "whilst I was at Penwithen we decided to *umm* put a drama production team together... it was just a group of us lads ... a way of ... I don't know, getting a story across for some of us."

Searching in his mind regarding how the group came together for the project Dan found it hard to remember. He assumes firstly that it was just for those who were interested or that maybe if it tied into a school programme where if you had behaved, you could choose various activities. He pointed out that the chosen group were neither friends nor from the same classes. Dan grapples with how they came to be part of the drama project and finally concludes: "I generally think it was just a chance to skive off – ah. Yes- this will be quite buckshee. I think it is probably where we came together…." Buckshee is a word Dan uses frequently and relishes through his narrative as it links to the boys' old habits.

They came to the BCCA for drama workshops every Wednesday. Dan described coming over from Penwithen School with their teacher and Teaching Assistant (TA), to what he remembers the name as being Bournemouth Arts Academy in fact the BCCA[2]. He searches to find wording for the activities they did in the workshops, at the same time demonstrating a real understanding of how the drama process works. He elucidates how initially they just thought the project would be "a laugh," a way of getting out of school**,** but how, as the project progresses, it became important; it gave them purpose:

> *"…*like workshops … on how to perform, how to get a story across, the emotions, the movements and stuff like that, so we would come over…and … we did quite a few small workshops … … and we act it ad- lib stuff just some … don't know what the word is, improv? we did quite a bit of *improv*. … …just having a laugh really … it was just a group of us lads that came over and, at first, I think [we thought] we'll just have a buckshee way of getting out of school … we'll just go over there and we'll just mess about - all day"

Dan formulates how the project shifted and: "… became quite important to all us." and how it: "gave us a bit of purpose. This is us; this is what we are doing, look what we are part of." Later Dan specifies how they took ownership of the drama. Dan called the play making process: "Our own little baby."

> "…we were just young, boisterous teenagers …who just wanted to mess about; we then started to invest in it. We… really started giving our opinions and putting a little piece of ourselves into it…so it became our project instead of just something the teachers wanted us to do or the teachers thought was a good idea."

Dan expanded further on their act of nurturing their emerging piece. As he remembers what they did, there is intensity in Dan's words:

> "We kind of made it, was like our own our little baby, our own little child we wanted to look after it … so I think it became important to all of us that we did well and we portrayed … I think we put quite a bit of emotional attachment into it."

Dan then moved his narrative in another direction. The project became a vehicle to counter some of the stereotypes and labelling; how he felt others perceived himself and the lads. They were more than just naughty boys:

> "It was important that other people saw that we're are not just … because of the type school we went to and the type of thing we used to get into trouble for. People looked at us and thought [they're from the] naughty boy's school … it was a way of showing - look we aren't just like that; these are struggles, this is what we are fighting against …So I feel it became quite important to us that it was done right and we did it right ... We didn't mess about with it. Messed about on the fringes, but very important when it was time to sit down and do it."

Dan explains with real insight the process of creating their play and how it enabled him and the group to express themselves through the fiction. He alludes to the damage some of them had gone through in their childhood. Dan, looking back at how they created *'Til it all Went Wrong,* can see the power of what they were doing. Not only in the telling of their stories, but they could release some of their frustrations:

> "…a production telling a story that wasn't about one of us individually but it's bits of our lives, bits of things we'd seen, umm, how we interpreted what we'd seen in our young lives, a lot of us have or had quite difficult upbringings, quite disruptive [pause] childhoods and obviously going to the school was part of that, umm, and it gave me certainly a way of venting some of the frustrations of childhood."

Dan, whilst describing the process of putting their stories and feelings into the play has a self-realisation: "…I was never able to talk directly about it, so putting it into a piece of drama, that was about everything but no one actually knew it was about me personally." He illustrated that the safety net of the drama process in using fiction to tell their stories was useful: "… it was nice because it was as if they [the audience] were watching something, but didn't know it was about us." Dan continues his story by recalling the content of the play, although the title of the play eludes him. He remembers clearly the physicality of their piece:

> "…I remember roller-skating and doing some back-flips, rapping. One of my good mates, Nick, umm, getting, actually getting quite hurt I believe, as part of the story - obviously - not in true life."

The cultural aspect is a recurring and an important motif of Dan's narrative, particularly around rap music. He displays a glow of adolescent excitement as he speaks with wonder about going to the drama space at the BCCA. It's a strong memory; there was the lighting balcony in Studio One, props, in particular the stage steps and significantly the opportunity to play their own music.

> "…all the lights …and it was all cameras and musical sound boards and I remember I had a MP3 player we used to put the music on the MP3 player we wanted to play; it would all be sound tracked and we did a video of it using the props like the steps just sitting on the steps and stuff like that, and it was brilliant."

When thinking again about the BCCA and who was present there, Dan strains to remember the entire drama group. There was a nod to the fact that both Jordi and I are present at the interview and were part of the Penwithen project. "Jordi did all our mixing and all the lights," he recalls him as being: Up there, at the top, weren't you?" a reference to the lighting tower. "With all the soundboards and stuff and …we'd always go up and would mess with them and you'd show …how they worked and what to do with them." Dan recollects that the play wasn't just acting but was multi-media: "We didn't just do the play-acting we did all the video with Jordi." He talked about how they filmed parts of the drama and used music, some of which they had composed. All of this then had "to match what we were doing on stage at the time." Dan then moves the story onto me who was the facilitator:

> "Then there was obviously yourself doing the drama teacher bit … I remember some of the workshops …some of them pulling funny faces [sound of blowing through lips] all this type of stuff."

He also recalls sitting together with some of the members of Vita Nova taking part but in a non-authoritative way: "…not saying right you have to do it like this, but how about you try and do it this way… coaching." Vita Nova were sharing "their actual experiences to get more insights into stuff." Dan, in particular, draws on his perception of Darren. There is confusion for Dan over Darren's role, his place within the drama group: "…then Darren turned up." When he reflects on him, he can't quite remember where he was from: "I think Darren was working with Vita Nova at the time as … what was he doing? … Darren was actually helping I think yourself and Jordi at the time." He then expanded on Darren's role in the project: "...Darren was helping us 'cos Darren was more our [age] …he was able to intermediate." He further explained that if he or Nick couldn't get the adults to understand: "grasp what we were trying to say," Darren could be the go-between. Dan reminisced about the significance of their youth culture: "because we weren't kids, we were young teenagers so we were *the nuts*, we had our own language our own ways of doing things, Darren was able to help us explain it in a more grown-up sense, type of way." After Dan's testimony of Darren's position as their intermediate he humorously delivers a contradiction. "But then he was quite childish with us." Dan tells how Darren grew into becoming "quite a close friend over the whole experience." He can't remember exactly the names of who took part except for "Nick, Darren and some of the others… David … I remember the geography type slash home-economic type teacher Miss Eileen Clews …and Miss Morgan teaching assistant aid and you guys."

Dan then continues his narrative in wondering who had: "the great idea of taking [their play] on tour." Dan is not sure of the order of places where they performed. He believed they firstly went to their school Penwithen and then: "to other schools around Bournemouth and the Dorset area it was really quite well received," including a girls' school BSG. [3l] He remembers the attention from adoring fans recalling:

> "I think we got in trouble due to exchanging phone numbers with the girls apparently not allowed to take numbers while we were in school, but hey… [little bit of laughter]"

Being part of the play made them attractive. When probed about the performance at Penwithen he talks passionately about the event. There is pride within his language. As he

speaks, he makes sense of their achievement referring to how they were identified before the project particularly, with mention of himself and Nick. He also makes a connection with taking their play *'Til it all Went Wrong'* to their school and linking it to the experience of watching Vita Nova performing *Scratchin' the Surface* into Penwithen in 2001.

> "I was quite proud …thinking about it … now that I remember that Vita Nova came, they had already seen what a more professional organisation was meant to look like … how it is performed and done and then there's -Dan and Nick the two oldest and roughest in the school with their crew rocking back up and I don't think anyone …because the type of people we were in school - we were quite nightmarish - so for us to put on something quite serious and quite powerful [was special]."

Dan's tone then shifted from bravado: "the two oldest and roughest in the school with their crew rocking back up," to seriousness as he reflected on how their achievement affected those at Penwithen who witnessed it.

> "It was well received, everyone really enjoyed it - the teachers…care staff and what not, really enjoyed it and I think they saw us in a different light. We weren't messing we weren't fighting."

Dan reflects on the satisfaction he felt for the project, *our thing*, and makes a point that they had made something: "during school but not in school" and then brought it back to Penwithen. They were able to show: "what we 've been doing we haven't been skiving, we haven't been messing about all the time." He also remembers that the play had an impact on the students at Penwithen who like himself would have been troubled, "quite a few people talked to me about it and asked me about it and said it was quite cool." Dan was content that the other students had understood the message of their play. He proudly added that as one of the eldest at his school the other pupils had come to him and: "wanted to talk about it and I could give them a bit of advice and chat to them, I think it opened people up a bit in school." Dan, continued by further elaborating that the other lads at Penwithen could see that, even though the drama group "were still pains in the necks," they were doing an activity that "meant something to us and they could see that. So, people would come up and chat to us about it … 'I had a mate just like it'… 'I love that song that song means that to me' …it was cool taking it back to Penwithen - glad it went well…it didn't bomb could have been a bit embarrassing."

Added to this Dan emphasised the significance of returning to his school with the play. He is almost animated in his use of language: "why we were so proud? because they had only seen us being destructive." Here was something that, together [they] had built. Rather

flamboyantly Dan said that they toured "everywhere." He also recognises that for the play to work they had "help, we needed that help" but he continued reiterating how the boys were considered by others as: "being nightmares for being aggressive, for being angry," but they'd had the courage to be able "to stand there, do what we did in front of our peers. In front of people who were judging us." In his narrative he emphasises and analyses the word naughty noting that it: "…was important to us because we were always naughty …." Dan then makes a significant observation that when it came to working on their play their behaviour changed: "we'd get serious and get on with it," because there was a belief within the group that what they were doing was important, "It was serious stuff that what we were doing." Dan at this point of his narration experiences a moment of self-discovery:

> *"…*I felt we built something instead…of destroying stuff, cos through my childhood, I always felt I was to blame. So, my behaviour meant I had to go to Penwithen, my behaviour meant I had to go into foster care - my behaviour - do you know what I mean? So …everything I had done I had been destroying everything around me, so this is what I was lumped with, tough - you can't behave this is where you've got to go. This wasn't we had done this instead of destroying it, such a big thing to us and it was …Just being asked to go to the Baltic Bell Festival was immense…cos it was like when we took it to the hotel in Bournemouth there was people there that was interested in us … that were quite important people."

Dan indicates how consequential it was for them to be welcomed and taken seriously. The tour led them to perform in the Hotel Miramar, Bournemouth, and was part of the British Council seminar.[4] He remembers: "getting those damned steps" into the hotel. Dan speaks almost as his young self again; he is still impressed that the group went to a hotel: "… it was a bit crazy it was actual adults and serious people that were coming to watch not just kids of our age*."*

When he relays the storyline of their play there is a nostalgic tone. Dan could be talking about his own life. For Dan there is huge emphasis on the value of friendship and love within '*Til it All Went Wrong*.

> "… a serious story, about a young lad that had a bit of difficulties, fell into the wrong crowd, did the wrong type of things, shop lifting, that kind of thing. It was all about friendship …the love of his friends helping him make the right decisions umm eventually all of his friends showing that you don't need to be this person you can be whoever you want to be, we all love yer, so don't go having to… act the big man … forgetting who your friends and family are and trying to fit in somewhere …it was quite a powerful message of friendship and love …. Of even if life beats you down, don't worry about it, pick your head up and keep going… there are people who will always support you and help you, and I think that was quite a good message for us young lads."

Dan describes how their storyline for their play evolved. Even though I am interviewing him he talks about my involvement as being their mentor. "We came up with storylines ourselves, obviously with a bit of prompting, a bit of help from Sharon our mentor and other people that were there." He talks about how they had: "heated discussions … I want to do this; I want that… It all came together."

Dan continues by propelling his narrative to the trip to Latvia. He emphasises that they had to gain permission to go. He repeats this several times, it was a big deal. The deeper complexity of his life is visible through his having to get hold of permission forms from foster and real parents. He has kept all the memorabilia until this day.

> "The next thing I know … were invited to Latvia. To the Baltic Bell Festival. The Festival of Love I remember it being called … which was immense - 'like what?' We had to get all these permissions, and I have actually got my permission form at home, in Latvian …"

He alludes to there being a bit of trouble on the way to the airport; it being: "quite a mental road trip, I think I got myself into a bit of trouble." Dan underplays the event, however, with subsequent probing, the story fills out.

> "We stopped at services and we were all messing about… [laughter] I can't remember exactly what it was …and one of the lads got a bit angsty with the others. And I remember he did something and ran away from me. Umm So I chased him, and I kicked out at him; as I kicked, he jumped and I swiped his legs out and he fell and broke his arm. [embarrassed laughter] Umm Which meant he couldn't fly to Riga. I remember it because I was devastated for him, I was gutted for him...it wasn't a serious thing we were doing we were messing. He wasn't very impressed …"

This incident resulted in Bradley being unable to travel to Latvia.

Dan articulately paints an evocatively rich picture of Latvia, partly, it appears from a now adult informed perspective**:**

> "We flew out to Latvia; umm it was a different world, it was a beautiful, beautiful place but with a cold Soviet rundown feel to it. It was big concrete buildings and we stayed in this hotel and there were old boys sat out on the balcony drinking vodka and playing cards; but all lovely people always say hello to you and that kind of stuff. There was always something happening I felt in Riga. You could go into any of the parks - always a festival going on with music and there's food tents always beer tents happening umm …"

When Dan continues with his story, he glowingly chronicles an exaggerated memory about their first performance, an excerpt from '*Til it All Went Wrong*, at the opening of the festival in Latvia and how it was received:

> "We got a standing ovation, and everyone absolutely loved it and word just spread about us, massive crowds of people wanting to watch this production of some young thuggish English lads."

In his labelling of the drama group as being "thuggish English lads," there is a machismo in his words. Their theatre piece was not like the other participants who were what he called "lovey–dovey." He uses this expression several times to explain the style of work at the festival. Alternatively, their play *'Til It All Went Wrong* was about brotherhood- it was a serious story. Their drama group had a different take on the Baltic festival's theme of love. Theirs "wasn't a lovey-dovey type thing, it was a brotherhood type idea of looking after the outcast." There is delight in Dan's portrayal of how he felt they were viewed by the others at the festival: *"*Everyone thought we were absolutely mental, I believe, doing back flips and rapping and stuff*."* There is pride in their difference. He stated that what they delivered to the festival "wasn't what everyone else was doing, let's put it that way!" The Penwithen drama group were: "telling a hard story… with soft overtone at the end and everything was OK at the end*."* He further explained when comparing their play to the other theatre work:

> "…nothing I feel was quite so poignant and quite as blunt; we were hitting it with a hammer basically, we were showing people we're doing drugs, dealing drugs and shoplifting …but there was a message wrapped up in it. I don't think I remember watching anything that was quite as powerful as…the message [we] were sending*'.*

Dan struggles with how to explain the meaning of love, the theme of the Festival, describing the other plays as being "absolutely brilliant" but depicting a very different kind of love: "a love you, kind of love but a family like brother and sister ... flowers and love and romance type stuff." Dan expresses how, in contrast, they were offering a gritty storyline to do with "friendship - helping your mate." He is convinced in his narration that the audience was apprehensive at first, when they saw them performing *'Til It All Went Wrong* and might have wondered what their play had to do with love, "just all walking around all gangster and swearing and playing rap music and robbing a shop, look-outs and stuff." Dan, recollecting the plot of their play, outlining a moment in a later scene when Nick's character who was called Ice, has been hurt or taken an over-dose. Dan remembers his character D at the end of the performance standing over him: 'looking down at him; I am rapping and he's on the

floor and later on all of us come together in a huddle, a hug kind of thing." Dan identified that this was the point when the audience "realised it wasn't just about these little bits of the story, about the negative stuff that we were portraying but.. that's where the love comes from." Dan uses masculine language: "a fellow brother … come on pick yourself up mate I've got your back … we can beat anything. We can fight against anything; we can achieve anything." His narrative is wrapped up in redemption:

> "…we were showing a dark part of everything and then the love that comes out of having someone to be able to just say - right come on you're making a mess of yourself look at the state of you, come on."

Dan appears, when describing the morals or essence of their play, to be revealing his own beliefs:

> "If you see a friend like this it's your duty as his friend to show him some love and I think that was the kind of difference between what we were saying and what everyone else was saying umm I think."

Further reflections on the meaning of brotherhood result in Dan remembering that the drama group became close and trusted each other, through the process of creating their play:

> "We were sharing some quite powerful secrets about ourselves with each other and when we sat down and chatted … a lot of the things in the production were what happened to us."

They portrayed their secrets within what he described as being a "context put around it to make it more drama'ish more like a show." But within their play were elements of what they had experienced "in the past or we had witnessed through our childhoods growing up." Dan tells how they opened up to each other gradually and trust stemmed from this because "we knew each others' little secrets." He emphasises that they weren't just sitting there talking about themselves, it was more about:

> "Putting a mask on it …everyone was able to connect with that, umm. Certain songs we used in the play itself [had been] played at best friend's funerals and stuff like that so they meant stuff to all of us.'

This bond that grew from the project meant they respected each other: "we all became friends." Dan emphasised that before, they had been disparate coming from different classes and "we were all from different parts of the county so we never met up after school

or anything like that unless we lived in the hostel together." The play enabled them to forge friendships that impacted on their school life:

> "We started to trust each other and talk to each other, outside of everything else that was happening so, when we got back to school if I saw Nick was having a hard time I'd would go and talk to Nick. Or if Nick saw I was getting me self all worked up about something, he'd come and talk to me and we 'd have a chat. Instead of blowing our tops we could [face] situations a bit better because we both knew a little bit about each other... So, we trusted each other a bit more and it made an easier connection. So yeah, we were a band of brothers, a friendship really."

When asked about the music for a friend's funeral he recalls: "I think it was a 2Pac[35] song[5]." Dan now always associates the song *Ghetto Gospel*[6] directly with their play:

> "…When it comes on the radio the first thing, I ever think about is that performance, is of Nick [as ICE] lying on that floor and I think I'm skating round him then I stop and I'm like why have you done this ICE? … why have you done this?"

Dan emphasised the importance of the music, that it was significant for them: *"*a family friend had died and it was played at his funeral," He elaborates about the lyrics of 2Pac's 'Ghetto Gospel' stating that they: *'*were quite powerf*ul,* and it's like…you're not going to have to stay beaten down you can rise, rise up again … rise up again*."* They used this song in their play: "it was a good one, a good song to pick for when Nick's character ICE is laid out." Dan identified that all the lads in the drama group were: "all into that kind of music."

He paints a full, rich and romantic picture of Latvia - the newness of the encounter still remains after all those years. He presents a gestalt experience where the group were welcomed. The first time he had ever been abroad. Dan is aware of the beauty of the place, conveying passionately: "how pretty the place was." He uses the word pretty many times in describing it. He mentions that at the festival they:

> *"…*watched other performances and took part in workshops where they … did more learning about drama and ways to just project different emotions through drama and that type of thing. Yeah, it was brilliant."

The impact of being in an alien place is profound in his narrative. In particular, Dan then remembers a magical experience, being taken out of Riga to Lielvārde for the Midsummer[7]. At Lielvārde the group were greeted. He notes there was no animosity. Dan makes the

[35] Tupac Famous American Rap Artist stage name 2Pac

connection that it was their involvement in the drama project that had opened up this experience for them all:

> "…It's just a back memory, of going to this forest and there's a wooden, like, type, like, an adventure centre …and there are people sat on blankets singing and there's lots of flowers about and everyone enjoying themselves, everyone having a good time - no animosity and it was in these woods and green hills … it was quite picturesque - a bit strange umm but for a young lad it was such an eye-opening experience. To be able to experience something like that, to see something like that through a drama, through a show you have produced you've put together to show people and have it so welcomed."

Dan, when probed further about Latvia, recalls the young "guides that would take us from place to place," and how they became "good friends …pen-pals." In later life he has revisited Latvia a few times for what he described as: "more adult entertainment type stuff weekend - piss ups," pointing out that Riga is the stag capital of Europe.

He then added his intense desire to return to Latvia saying:

> "I think that's where I want my honeymoon once I get married. I think I going to Riga umm because it is beautiful and it left such a mark on me as a kid. It really did. I don't know whether that's because it's the first place I'd travelled abroad or anything."

The sense of achievement the drama group felt is deeply important in Dan's story. He stated it was: "A proud moment, it was an achievement – a massive achievement."

He then reflected on what remains of the project for him today. "I took a lot from it that helped me in, like, later parts of my life. I took some quite strong morals from what we did." He reflects on the purpose of what they were doing: "If we were able to help anyone else with life lessons." Dan tries to describe both the consciousness and unconsciousness of being an adolescent:

> "We didn't realise it at the time; we thought it was one big outing. We were just young 14/15 year-old kids we just thought it was brilliant, but we kind of did understand the message we were portraying and what we were getting across."

Dan then reiterates how important it was that their play spoke to other young people and got a message across because of its relevance for their peers as it embodied their youth culture:

> "…hearing someone rapping and talking the way they talk and doing the things they do in their environment but giving such a strong powerful message - I think a lot of people would have listen to it at my age."

When Dan further reflected on the aspect of achievement, he found it hard to explain, returning again to negative labels that had identified himself and the hostel boys from Penwithen, stating that they were:

> "Thugs, we were loud aggressive verbal angry [teenagers], difficulties learning, difficulties with family problems coming from all sorts of backgrounds from foster care to adoption; nowhere else would cope with us, so we had to go to this one place [Penwithen School]."

Dan then gives a window into how they were disciplined if they kicked off by using the words restrained and solitary room. Dan powerfully defines themselves as being on the edges of society.

Dan, then changes tone and explains enthusiastically the shift of attitude that occurred towards them when they performed their play. "At the end of it people were coming up to us and wanting to talk to us and not walking past us." Before making the play, he said that people would stigmatise them: "He goes to Penwithen." Continuing with his narrative he recalled that pupils from his old school, previous to his being excluded, after they had watched *'Til It All Went Wrong* came over to him. Beforehand, Dan notes: "no one would come near me, like that ...because of who I was ...and because of the difficulties I had. I don't think they knew how to approach me." Dan reflects on the change of attitude towards him after performing in the play, saying that it "Took down a few barriers," that they were then regarded as "not just the naughty kids, but there is something behind all of that, there is a reason for it." This point of understanding was important for Dan. He embellished the drama group's achievement, identifying that their work had a purpose and was important:

> "Look what we did. We put that together. We opened people's eyes… … I genuinely feel we did spread a message and people got the point …it was an important message that people had to know and had to listen to. Because trying to sit down and tell a 14/15-year-old kid look, don't do drugs. Drugs are bad look umm look out for yourselves look out for your friends. You do that and they say - yeah don't worry I'll do that anyway you know what I mean?"

When reflecting further on the message of the play Dan told of what he has taken from the project and used in his subsequent life:

> "It had an impact on me because I took it seriously, I took it into everything else I did after that. I used part of that experience. I still got in trouble I was still a pain. But I took loyalty beyond everything else. The moral courage to be able to stand up and say - that ain't right."

Dan, almost relived how the audience responded to their play, stating that their delivery of the play captivated the audiences which he describes as "watching, anticipating what is coming next." Dan accounts for attitude due to the fact they had worked so hard "put so much in it … [and] wanted it to achieve."

Dan then brought his narrative to the present day: "The fact that I am sat here talking to you now." He also brings up that I had told him I had given a lecture at Reading University[9] in May 2018 about applied drama practice when I had talked about the Penwithen Project:

> "and you showed it [the documentary from 2002] at Reading the other day and it's still being used and there's still a message there…The fact that it's still being used to pass the message that we wanted to give people… it's quite cool and I'm quite happy about that."

Reflections and key concepts:

There was still a cloud of energy hanging in the studio after Dan's interview. A combination of excitement and nervous energy as he tried to piece together this specific time in his life. In particular there is a huge imprint of his troubled childhood. There is a sense of displacement, a feeling of deep abandonment in Dan's life. He has experienced a great deal of self and social labelling. The repeated use of the word naughty. The impact of being excluded from school and being sent so far away for his education because of his behaviour, had a crushing effect on his earlier life. As an adult it is still a strong aspect of his being. Not being understood, he mentions his undiagnosed ADHD. Through the interview, Dan reveals his thoughts about his childhood and the circumstances, saying: **"**I always felt I was to blame." There is also an understanding in hindsight that Penwithen did help him.
The drama project had a deeply significant effect on him. At first, an activity that potentially meant time to skive off school evolved into a pivotal intervention for himself and the group. The shift was partly connected to going to a specialised drama space i.e., the BCCA. He talked about the props, lights with excitement, that they were allowed up into the lighting tower, that they were allowed to listen to their music.

Making their play *'Til It All Went Wrong* was a relevant piece of work expressing and reflecting their lifestyles, their experiences. Because their play had meaning for them the lads invested in the project, it became "their baby". Trust grew through their involvement in the drama process leading them to become a unit. Their play became a passport to bringing the group into society, but notably on their terms, telling their story. Audiences of adults,

"serious people", and young people seeing their play could begin to understand where they were coming from.

Taking their play back to Penwithen was profound for Dan. This was actually a very brave thing to do, acting in front of the other lads at such a volatile school. They were seen in a different light; no longer as destructive but as achievers. This impacted also on the other boys who saw the drama group as role models, allowing them to open up after witnessing the play. Performing at their school brought about a turnaround of perception; that is to say they became the ones with knowledge.

Opportunities came from their having a play to share with others. Travelling to Latvia was deeply significant. Latvia was beautiful and a different world. It was Dan's first time abroad, to a place he has revisited and wants to have his honeymoon. He intends for a major moment in his life to occur in the place he went to as a teenager on a drama trip. Dan recalls that in Latvia there was no animosity. This strikes as particularly pertinent as the environment he was in at Penwithen and his background would have been full of friction. He even started his journey to Latvia in a violent way, albeit unintentional, that resulted in his mate breaking his arm and not making the trip. Dan describes his own feelings as being "devastated for him". The incident with Bradley [Dan couldn't remember his actual name] is interesting, as playfighting was always an issue with the boys.

In terms of their play, there is a sense of pride in being outsiders. Their piece wasn't like the others. He repeatedly describes the other participants' pieces as lovey-dovey. Their play was real. It was an expression of their culture. They could vent their feelings in the drama. *'Til It All Went Wrong* was "blunt like a hammer", hard-hitting, shoplifting, fighting and stealing*;* but in the context of the performance these actions were accepted and acclaimed. There is a strong masculine, machismo tone - camaraderie that the drama group had become a "band of brothers". They knew each others' secrets. There is also physicality with the back flips and play fighting.

Dan expresses awareness that the trip was all down to them making their play.
They were worth something. The invitation to Latvia, their flying to a beautiful country, was all because they made something instead of destroying things. Dan also emphasised that he has taken morals that he learnt through the drama process into his life.

He reflects on the purpose of what they were doing and concludes that: “If we were able to help anyone else with life lessons,” then the project was worthwhile.

5.1.3 Life Sketch Nick

Third interview: Nick Penwithen Boy (non-hostel)

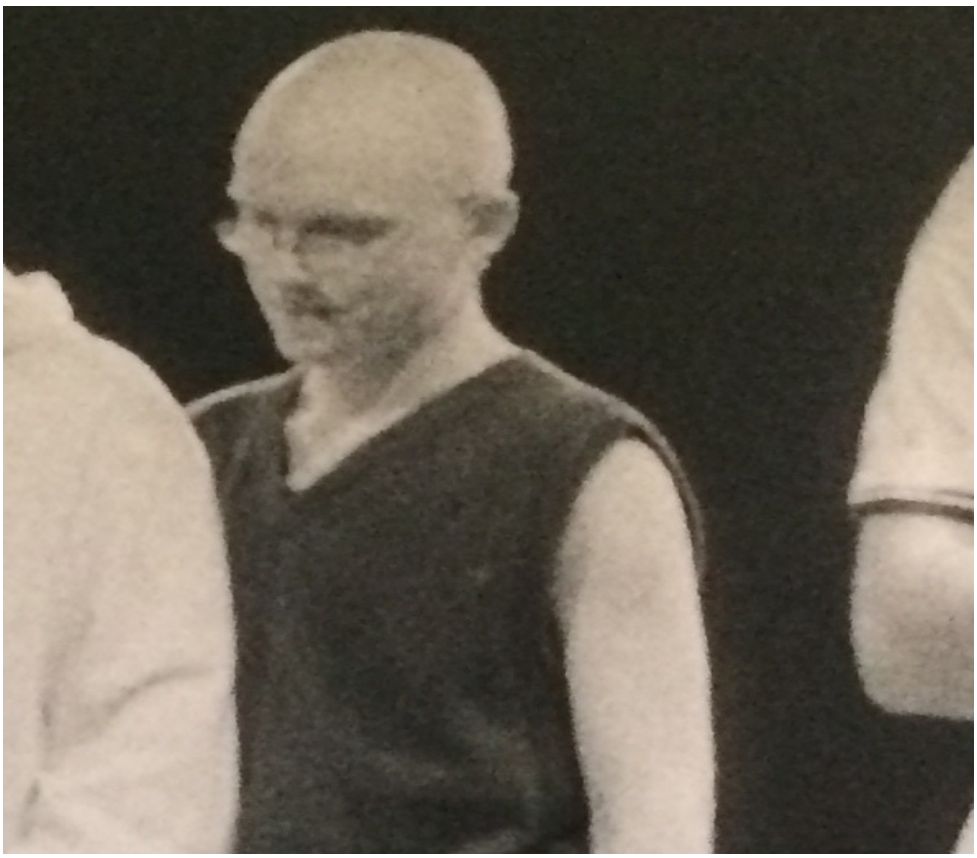

Image of Nick in 2002 performing in the last scene of '*Til it All Went Wrong*

Photograph 2001: ©Martin Coyne

Photograph 2019: ©Jordi Robert.

Context:

Nick is now 32 years old. He works as a specialist installer of fascias and **c**ladding on properties. He is in the process of setting up his own business. He has a partner, a stepdaughter, and a little boy of two and a half.

Nick was a Penwithen Boy, but he did not live in the hostel. Instead, he was daily driven by taxi from his home in Christchurch to Penwithen School, a round trip of about 62 miles. Nick had a criminal record that he describes as: "being as long as his arm," when he was expelled from his local secondary school and sent to Penwithen. After the drama project he returned to the theatre in education team and undertook work experience. He was involved mainly in two projects *Dancing with Death*[36]*,* a TIE drugs awareness programme, and a refugee project called *Give Us A Voice.*

After his work experience was completed, Nick made a surprise visit, running into our BTiE[37] office at the BCCA and saying: "Can you tell me about the war?" This would have been 2003 when British troops took part in the coalition invasion of Iraq. Unknown to Nick, I was personally involved in the demonstrations, *Don't attack Iraq*.

It was seventeen years since I had last seen Nick. We met again on 18.6.19 at Vita Nova, and to me he looked the same. It was good to see him again.

A Life sketch of Nick's Penwithen Story:

> "I think it was life changing for me… it gives you a little voice behind your sort of shadow if you want to put it that way."

I began the interview in the same way, asking just one question:

> "I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story."

Nick thinks for a moment, then begins as all good stories do:

> "Right. Well, I'll start at the beginning makes it easier I suppose. Um, Penwithen was a school we went to… for troubled children shall we say… I ended up going there …it was a bit of a shock to the life, being there."

[36] *Dancing with Death* a BTIE drugs awareness programme that was toured in schools.
[37] BTIE: Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team

He goes on to relay that, at Penwithen, he "met a few decent people" and it was there that he began "sorting myself out a little bit", adding, that part of this reorganisation of his life was tied into the drama project, "obviously then coming to see you lot."

Nick, when asked to appraise what he meant by *troubled*, explains that: "all the students were at Penwithen School for different reasons." He was there for what he described as "anger issues… I couldn't control my anger." He also notes that some pupils had ADHD. He added that some of the students found themselves there as they experienced "not so good upbringings." In summing up he displayed a clear understanding that their being there was essentially for "the same reason … to try and get an education of some sort, whatever their struggles were. That you couldn't do in a mainstream school."

Reflecting on his comment "a shock to the life" Nick recounts his surprise on his induction day at school, after being excluded from mainstream education. He suddenly realised the level he had arrived at due to his behaviour:

> "…I think that's the way that … my brain worked then. I mean before I went there I, I generally, just thought …I was just a little bit louder than the other kids at my normal school…I remember …I had a little walk round [during] induction for my first day, and walked into …what was going to be my classroom, and there was chairs and tables being thrown at teachers. You know it was just a shock to my system of, I didn't think I was… that kind of people."

Nick then philosophically recounts how the experience of school broadened his outlook on life.

> "…after being around them kind of people you start to understand a lot more about… who they are, what they've been through...everyone's sort of in the same boat. So, I think …don't judge a book by its cover … I say once you're there for a while and you, you meet 'em all and you get on with them, you understand things a lot differently. It opens up your eyes."

He wonders how he became involved in the project. He can't remember to begin with. However, slowly he begins to picture a possible scenario about how the lads became part of the drama project.

> "I think it was Eileen Clews come and… give a little inkling … a little bit of acting, something outside of school. I think at first everyone just wanted to, get out of school for the day… …I think a few of us wanted to do it more for …just get a bit more creative I suppose, and some wanted to get out of school. As I say, everyone that did it was glad they did do it in the end."

When recalling what they actually did, he said: “I believe there was a few ideas thrown round and what sort of play and that we wanted to do…it was an anti-drug play we ended up doing wasn't it?” *H*e looks to me for help. [I can only smile and nod due to the chosen method of interviewing]. Then, playing with the word anti he laughingly posits that their play was about “anti being a little terror I suppose.”
Nick continues his narration focusing on the drama-making process of their play and his surprise at how their work:

> “…escalated quite quickly… It was a shock to us and a shock to you lot how quickly we sort of adapted to everything and got on with it. And how everyone got on well.”

Before the project, none of the boys had any real connection with each other. Beyond the improvement of the group’s relationships with one another, Nick cites that their behaviour also progresses outside of the work at the BCCA and impacted “even in school, sort of, started looking up.” He then went on to say that together the group created a decent piece. When probed, Nick described the difference between adhering to a normal school curriculum and how Penwithen School and the drama project based at the BCCA worked. When talking about *normal school*, he expressed how very set it was that: “you have to do this lesson, this lesson, this lesson.” He conveys how Penwithen: “was completely opposite… You joined in if you wanted to join in. If you didn't, you're not going to get nothing out of it… you get out what you put in.”

Nick moves on with his account, focusing on the drama project. He speaks with some awe and excitement that the work at the BCCA was “something completely off the hook, …completely different. It sort of gave you a bit of freedom, to express yourself without…all the teachers around you.” He then details how the approach by the facilitators, the volunteers, and me, differed from the teachers at Penwithen.

> “You guys were more relaxed than teachers. But you still had to sort of look after us at the same time… just more… laid-back way of …dealing with us. And I think that's what we needed. That's why I think we all improved.”

His portrayal is also sanguine about the actual level of their improved behaviour: “Don't get me wrong, it, it wasn't drastic we weren’t all saints after that. But it was just you could see signs of improvement in behaviour and attitude I think.”

Nick struggles to remember the name of the play. He thinks it was *Dancing with Death*[34]. But then realises it wasn't that play. *Dancing with Death* was in fact a TIE piece that Nick took part in when he came and undertook work experience with Bournemouth Theatre in Education (BTiE) post the Penwithen project.

He shifts his account to remembering taking their play '*Til It All Went Wrong* into schools within the local area. He recalls performing a bit further afield. He looks to me for help, but I can't answer, so he shifts his narrative to Latvia. Again, he can't recall: "how it came about that we ended up going to Latvia." But he emphasised that it was "quite a massive step for a lot of people." Interestingly, Nick, within his narration, at this point, takes on more of an external perspective. He doesn't include himself in the massive step. He points out that some of the boys in the drama group had limited experience of travel, stating:

> "I think a couple of the lads hadn't even been outside their, sort of, their local area. Even to come here [the BCCA] was quite a big thing. And then to, to go abroad and do it."

Nick, on considering the fact that some of the lads hadn't ventured beyond Dorset, pointed out that he himself had travelled. He had been abroad to Spain and other parts of England, suggesting he had more life experience than the others and consequently the trip to Latvia wasn't so much out of his comfort zone. Nick within his memory of the other lads' experience of travelling to Latvia, and finding themselves in such unfamiliar circumstances, displays discernment and understanding:

> "…a couple of them … you could see the look in their faces. Especially when we turn up to Latvia. It's like bloody hell. It's like… it's a completely different world out here. … … [claps hands] -- I think Nathan… fell in love out there a few times, and it was lovely people out there, they were just really nice. Very warm and welcoming to us. And I think it was just a shock to them to see, there are other places other than where they live."

When Nick contemplates this whole situation, he reflects on how the staff coped in taking the lads to Latvia. "It must have been hell for you lot to put up with us lot, oh… I've forgotten how we got there, on a plane was it? Yeah [laughs]. Must have been a nightmare." His-memory is vague around the number of times they performed their play in Latvia "Two or three, different sets there didn't we?" Penwithen Boys performed an excerpt of '*Til It All Went Wrong* at the opening at the Maza Gilde and then the full play at the Soviet-built Par Teātra. Reviewing the whole experience he said it was: "all really good." As Nick unfolds his gestalt portrayal of the project, he has a moment of self-realisation:

> "I think it was life changing for me… it gave you a little voice behind your sort of shadow if you want to put it that way."

On later consideration of this metaphor, Nick considers the analogy with clarity and insightfulness:

> "I just mean … when you are…obviously, different to other kids because obviously you're not in a normal school so there must be something… you do end up living in your own shadow, as such. Until you sort of get something …that brings you out of that. And then you get a nice little voice that sort of pats you on the back about it... you can finally tell yourself that you're doing something good. And I think once you get that, a little bit of light when you've lived in the dark for a while. I think it … can't do anything else but improve your life."

After returning from Latvia, he recalls that because "Everyone was in the last year of school …it [the project] sort of fizzled out, which was quite sad really. And then it was obviously 17 years [laughs] later, I get a phone call." He comments that he still sees a couple of the lads. Since the project memories of Latvia have occurred to Nick "every, like, couple of years." He reminisces how he looks back and thinks of that time in 2002; "something will jog your memory." He adds that he can still recall part of the rap 'I'm trapped inside a cage in this world full of rage.' Asked later about the rap he gradually pieces together the next part of the lyrics:

> "I'm trapped inside a cage in this world full of rage. Too many fears today, you've got to blow 'em all away ...or something like that. And I don't think that was my line I think my line was the next line, and I can't even remember that one. I think that was… Darren and Dan's bit I can remember. But I think that's because you're waiting …for your bit to come so you listen to theirs."

He refers to Darren, remembering that he listened to hip-hop and that he helped them write the rap. He added to this that, due to their becoming friends, he also "started listening to a lot of rap. I still do now." He makes a cultural reference to the fact that Darren wrote their rap for the play in a style that was "very sort of Tupac[35] like, which … was his favourite rapper at the time." In hindsight he can see their rap closely resembled Tupac. Nick observes in his telling how adolescents crave ambition and fame: "Everyone thought they were a big-time rapper at the time. As kids do."

Nick then makes a connection with the project and how it has affected his later life:

> "… it's definitely… helped me in a lot of ways. Just when …you're standing… in front of a lot of people performing. It does give you a sense of something that you don't get if you don't do it if you know what I mean. Even through life it gives that little

> confidence boost that you need… even with like job interviews, or… just getting on in everyday life."

On my enquiring about confidence, Nick's recollections display how important it was for the boys to feel wanted. Woven into his narration is how the Latvian experience formed a heightened coming of age backdrop for the boys.

> "…yeah Latvia. I think her name was Inga. Inga, and then I don't know if it was her sister or a friend. I can never remember her name. But Inga was absolutely lovely. But, but they both were lovely. They sort of, when the older guys, were, weren't about, they would sort of us take us under their wing, and … helped us out. And I remember one time, we went out… I can't even remember, it was sort of like…we went to like a place, for like a night meal … and me Darren and the two girls … ventured off. They showed us a few little places around town. It, it was lovely. It just sort of felt, wanted if you know what I mean. …you know you're in their country and they, they accepted us really, really well. Which was … it was really nice at the time."

Nick then remembers the heat in Latvia: "it was like 37 degrees; it was so hot." This reminiscence leads into a vivid memory that occurred when the group were making their way to the opening of the festival. There was a downpour:

> *"…* we were in the town centre and there was like a massive shelter…probably like a monumental sort of piece, and the heavens… just broke loose. And literally …like raining cats and dogs massively, and we all had to go back and get changed because literally we were soaked through from the head to the toe. And then we ended up going to the show; I think we were about an hour late."

He gives a gestalt impression of the trip to Latvia. Nick's narrative is profound and reveals a juxtaposition of where the lads were at the beginning of the Latvia experience, and how they were emotionally at the end of their trip:

> "On the way there I thought we were the noisiest, noisiest bunch … after we'd been there, I think we were there two days, or three days? ...I can't remember. Uh, and meeting some absolutely amazing people, that sort of touched you in a way, a few started feeling a bit too attached…to a couple of the nicer ones there … we were probably the quietest people on the journey back. And it was mad, just you know, the type of lads that we all were. You know, mouthy, swearing at people and now everyone was full of tears and full of sadness, on the way home, to be leaving the place."

Nick explains in more detail his emotional response, as partly connected to "them two girls that we got really friendly with," but also the bond between the lads in the drama group. "All the guys that … were part of the whole thing." Nick became more intense in his portrayal of events and how they felt: "You weren't going to ever go back there, for

anything, or didn't think you were going to go back there … it was just upsetting, I was, I remember I was crying my eyes out. Really did."

Nick then reflects, trying to understand his feelings in 2002. In so doing he offers insight into the complex emotions of teenagers:

> "… not even knowing why I was crying, 'cause at that age you don't really know what your feelings are, as such, they just sort of creep up and hit you and bite you in the ass don't they … I just remember being really upset that we were leaving. The people, you know, what we'd done. And it was sort of like the last curtain call for that project wasn't it. … And it was sort of like knowing that it was the end of something that was … really good [clears throat]."

He wonders at this emotional response, acknowledging that he has the capacity to become attached. However, he differentiates how he might experience a sense of attachment if he was away for a week or two. But, in the case of Latvia he expresses dismay, as their stay was brief: "But two or three days you wouldn't expect it. It was such an amazing experience, that I think it just attached itself to you. Or you attached yourself to it really."

He recounts how the whole experience brought the drama group together, explaining that they were "closer when we got back." Nick then related how he left school at 15 and so "left all the lads behind." He is loosely in touch with a couple of them, but it is only Darren who he remains properly in contact with. He cites this as being due to the fact they had mutual friends and came from the same area. He also alluded to their past being not always straight forward: "… did the same sort of things, whether they were good or bad."

He then returns to the overall impact of the drama project: "really, really good experience." How they met "some amazing people." He then makes the connection of how that came about, acknowledging the presence of both Jordi and myself within the interview:

"All through you guys really… you know, you lot helped us out in a lot of ways."

Nick then makes a comment about the relationship the lads had with me as facilitator, Jordi and all the other mentors, and how that differed from their teachers at Penwithen. He comments: "I think you did what our teachers were trying to do [Laughs] …for so many years." When asked to expand on the phrase, he said: "It was just a more … relaxed approach." He described how the teachers who "were trying to shout at you," would often achieve the opposite effect. He also said that their approach could come across as being "condescending towards you," and this would cause an angry response. In trying to make sense of the attitude of the facilitators at the BCCA, and why their delivery worked with the boys he says:

> "I mean you talked to us like human beings, you talked to us all on the same level. There was never a favourite, apart from obviously myself [Clears throat]. But no … all the guys, they all treated us the same, and I think that's what everyone liked. There was no above, no below. And, uh, I think you got the best out of, out of us as what you could."

Nick, then returns to the beginning of the story and how the whole project may have been aborted.

> "I'm trying think the first time I come to the centre then … how many was there, about six or seven of us. I think two of us … well not me myself … had been an absolute nightmare on the way over [from Penwithen] and I think we're getting threatened to take them back, which would have been meant we'd all have had to have been taken back. I think, you, or one of the other guys, managed to talk the teachers round to keep us there … which I'm glad you did."

When contemplating their nightmare behaviour, Nick is able in hindsight to recognise and understand the ethos of the Penwithen approach: "what you put in is what you get out." Retrospectively, he perceives, what an unusual situation it was for the lads. They had found themselves at an art centre in Boscombe participating in drama workshops. This comparison to what they were used to, a constantly fluctuating and chaotic life at Penwithen School. Nick makes reference to the relaxation exercise, and its calming effect on the lads. He adds humour to his telling:

> …you take out six or seven lads that are [running] riot round a school and you stick 'em in a place like this [the BCCA] before we spoke to anyone, it was just like mayhem. It was like, you know [claps hands], it was like giving a baby like, you know five cups of coffee, and, and a puppy to play with you know [Laughs]. And it was just, it was just funny. But then obviously you did that … relaxation thing with us and it just went 'voom', calmed us all down and I think we all loved it from then."

When probed, he thinks back to that very first drama workshop and the meditation exercise. It is a very positive memory:

> … like a calming exercise… before that I'd never ever … would have believed anything … that you can you feel anything. But I remember that feeling now, … I nearly feel asleep halfway through it, it was that relaxing. I remember you saying it was like a ball of fire, going up through your feet, into your chest or something like that, into your head, and you can actually feel the heat, 'cause you'd got us in such a, like, relaxed state…you could actually feel it inside, I remember that. That sticks with me. [at the end of the exercise] …you told us all to wake, like you know get up. And I think only two of us out of the seven got up. Everyone had fallen asleep [laughs]."

Nick told how the other boys had talked about the exercise after the workshop and they had felt the same. He remarked: “I still can't believe how you do it now. I might even get you to do it one day soon [laughs]...And it was lovely. It was just so …really relaxing.”
Nick then reflected on the experience of performing their play ‘*Til It All Went Wrong* in public.

> “The first time …that rap… that was quite … a tough one. It's all right acting and speaking in front of … a camera or whatever. But once you're actually … singing or rapping, or having to do something out the norm, it was a lot harder.”

He then continued by talking about the challenges the other boys went through, in acting in front of an audience. In so doing he displays a level of perception when considering how some of the other boys from Penwithen were naturally introverted and shy. His narration once more takes on a humorous slant.

> “… I think everyone was worried 'cause … you're going to be acting, in front of people. Once you get the first bit out the way … it wasn't so bad, but there was a couple of lads that … they would... struggle to talk … to a mirror … you know when they're brushing their teeth or something ... I can't shut up most of the time, so it was not so hard for me … And then everyone sort of come out their shell. And then, as I say everyone got a lot closer.”

Nick then moves the story, backwards, recalling how the drama group would arrive back at Penwithen School after their workshops at the BCCA. He relates the reaction of the other students who were not part of the project:

> “… even after the first one [workshop]. 'Cause you go back to school and you've got something to talk about ... and I think a lot of the other lads at school … were a bit sort of jealous because … before we come everyone would sort of take the ‘mick’ about what you're doing. And then when we got back to the school, it was sort of like everyone really loved it, and enjoyed it, and they could hear us talking about it and then realised it was, better than what they were taking the mick out of.”

He further detailed the other Penwithen boys’ misconceptions of their project. How at that age they were teased ... “ah you're going to be acting, singing, dancing” … they automatically think … it's very “girly.” The initial micky-taking subsided as they witnessed, over the weeks, a transformation of their fellow schoolmates. The drama group members were coming back to school as: “more of a unit, … you went as six, seven separate people, and after the first few weeks we were coming back as a seven unit.” This sense of belonging, as a unit, continued into their school life: “We hang around more together, sat next to each other talking about it.”

Nick proudly reflects that the opportunity of taking part in the drama project was, he believed, “a onetime offer…, and I think they were just jealous that they didn't get involved in the end.” Nick continues his portrayal of his story by remembering the proud response of his parents when they performed at Penwithen school: “I think we pulled it off in the end … I think that's the first time my mum and dad looked at me like I'd done something any good.” Returning to the impact on his parents Nick illuminates their response, in their seeing their son in a different light:

> “… after the performance, I think my mum had a little tear in her eye and, normally when she's got a tear in her eye it's 'cause she's taking me to court. … … afterwards they come up and I remember you talking to them, … they were talking to everyone and, and everyone was praising me. And they just come and give me a big cuddle, I remember they bought me a takeaway that night, and it was just a nice sort of moment with, with 'em both. And obviously it was the first of many after that, it was alright. But up to that point it was always, always bad news or something that I've done wrong. And it was just to seeing that it was something good come out of it. In fact, that was one of the best things that come out of it.”

Nick makes a connection with how his interest in rap continued after the drama project and into his later teenage years: “I did actually start making my own music after, when I was about 16, 17. Got onto a few … pirate radio shows … Doing, rap music.”
Reflecting on the holistic aspect of the Penwithen project Nick’s words flow. In linking the strands of the project together, Nick arrives at a level of understanding of the elements of creativity within the drama process that he, and the lads, had gone through:

> “…what you guys are doing with the filming, the lighting, just everything. I think it opens your mind to, what can be done … anything you do in life … you look behind the scenes, around the scenes, under, over. Instead of looking at everything exactly what it is, and that's it … it makes you look more creatively at everything, and you have to look at everything. Even at … a conversation with someone, you don't take everything they say as granted, you got to think why have they said that? How have they said that? …It's like brainstorming before you start doing anything. You have to think, not overthink, because that can get you wrong the other way … it makes you think of two sides to every stone … like a, conversation and, and it just makes you think better, I think. Even down to the music. …I enjoyed making music for a good seven eight years after [the project] …I never expected to get anywhere - I just enjoyed doing it?”

He closes his story with a final thought on how the project releases creativity, how it has left him with memories and a desire to return to Latvia:

> “It does definitely open your creative sort of side when you do something like this ... it sticks with you ... I'm done now. That's it. [laughs] No, just thank you for the nice

memories … it would be good to get us all back together again. Maybe even do something together again. That would be good. I'd be all up for that [claps hands]. And, uh, let's get back to Latvia."

Reflections and key concepts:

After the interview with Nick, I was reminded of how he often surprised me when he was a teenager. That, somehow, it was frequently him who came out with an important suggestion or would make salient observations. Nick managed to surprise me again seventeen years on with what he said. I was also reminded of his sense of humour.
The impact of going to a school for troubled young people remains. He alluded to mainstream education as "normal". There is a recollection of being horrified that his behaviour had led him to attend an institution where tables and chairs were thrown at teachers. However, he was able to see in hindsight that what Penwithen School offered was useful. That it was open, and it was up to the individual to choose to engage or not. He also shows real understanding for some of the lads who were there who not only had educational statements, but were from very difficult home lives. There is a sense that Nick is someone who is able to reflect and try and make sense of situations in which he found himself.

He notes that the level of engagement by the students with the drama took them, and those around by surprise. They had entered the project at the BCCA in a chaotic manner, but he cites that the mediation exercise really calmed them down. He also refers to the different pedagogical approach by the facilitators at the BCCA and the teachers at Penwithen School. The relaxed atmosphere at BCCA and the sense of being treated as an equal had a big effect on Nick.

He talks about how the discovery of rap through the drama work which continued to be part of his life after the close of the project. As did the confidence he gained through the achievement of making and performing '*Til it All Went Wrong*.
He acknowledges that his engagement with the project was transformative. He alluded to a sense of shame at being taken out of normal school. The drama project presented a way out of what he described as being in his own shadow, offering another reality; "you can finally tell yourself that you're doing something good". This alternative that the project rendered also shifted other people's perspectives of the boys, in particular Nick's relationship with his parents who saw him at last succeeding.

The trip to Latvia was profound for him. He recalls a feeling of being wanted, how the drama group became emotionally attached to the situation in Latvia. They arrived at the festival as the noisiest participants and how at the end they were very quiet and deeply upset at having to leave. Nick is thankful for the memories that the whole experience gave him. There is a real sense of the trip being tangled with adolescence love, not just by himself but by other members of the group and an exposure to beauty. He would like to return to Latvia with the group.

Conclusions from Interviews:

After reviewing the individual life-sketches, it is clear that the open-ended narrative style interviews produced stories that at times collided, as they had all been part of the same project, but also reveal unexpected experiences that were unique to the teller.
What is strongly revealed within all of the interviews is the relationship between the lads and the broader socio-political implications of their experiences. The following section focuses on the unique individual features drawn from the interviews.

The three personalities of the boys, now men, and fathers, were reflected in the way they told their stories. As their interviewer, and also their facilitator at the time of the project, I could easily recognise that the essential elements of all the boys' personalities from when they 14 and 15 years old, were intact all these years later.
After such a long period of time parts of the recollections were hazy. However, the open-ended narratives unveil what remains strongly and was of great importance to the participants.

Unique features from Darren's interview:

For Darren as a non-Penwithen boy his story, his positioning, is to an extent, linked to the fact that he had a different relationship with me, than the other boys. He spoke with real emotion at times. For him, being my helper gave him a role, and with this came a form of kudos. Being my helper gave him a positive label and identity. At the beginning of the project Darren became the go-between of the adult and teenage world. A key aspect of Darren's interview was the isolation and loneliness he struggled with as a teenager.
'I suppose I had been a kind of loner … I left school at such a young age'. (Attard, D: 2018)

The Penwithen boys' project afforded him an opportunity to be with his peers and with that, a sense of belonging. One of his detailed memories is staying in the dorms in Latvia with the other lads. The project filled a void for him; offering positive healthy memories at a time of confusion where he says the lines were blurred between where he stood as a teenager and was mingling with an unhealthy adult world. Ironically, being part of a drama group, consisting of an eclectic, mixed-up, messed–up troupe of lads, offered him a sense of normality. The project gave him back a part of his lost childhood.

> I wasn't having teenager experiences as a teenager I was having older people's experiences as a teenager. So, when I look back now, I am grateful for having teenage experiences as a teenager. (Attard, D: 2018)

Unique features from Dan's interview:

Dan found it easy to express himself. There was a real flow and energy in his commentary. For him part of the unique features of his interview was a feeling of being abandoned, of not being understood - undiagnosed ADHD. I can, to a lesser extent, empathise with this, as all through my school education undiagnosed dyslexia led me to feel an acute sense of failure and frustration. There was also physicality in his interview. He remembered the back flip he performed and also a play fight on the way to the airport, that resulted in an accident and Bradley not making it to Latvia.

Being part of the play Dan believed helped young audiences to understand who they were and why they behaved in certain ways; there was more to them than being seen as naughty boys. The importance of the content of their play '*Til it All Went Wrong*, and how it was different to the rest of the pieces at the festival was deeply important to Dan.

> … we were showing people were doing drugs and dealing drugs and shoplifting … but there was a message wrapped up in it. I don't think I remember watching anything that was quite as powerful as … the message [we] were sending. (Stanaway, D: 2018)

That they were involved in something that had meaning and was serious, useful, was significant for Dan. This parallels with research I carried out with Vita Nova. It identified that giving back altruism, was of deep importance to the group, a key driver for their participation in the community theatre work. Dan reflected on the purpose of their play as

being: “able to help anyone else with life lessons.” Vita Nova’s mantra was: “If we can help to stop one person going down the road we went, it would be worth it.”[38]
Dan also cites how the drama process allowed them to tell their stories through a safe frame, that the morals he learnt through the play, he took into life: “If you see a friend [in trouble] … it's your duty as his friend to show him some love.” (Stanaway, D: 2018)

Unique features from Nick’s interview:

Nick was much more economical in his telling of his story. His unique features being that his anger issues had led him to a level that he hadn’t recognised. For him mainstream was “normal” and being outside of that meant that there was something not right with him. Nick displayed understanding and empathy for the other boys from Penwithen within the drama group, that they had come from home lives that were very different from his own. For him the experience of the drama project was transformative, it offered an alternative that broke the cycle of a shame-based existence, which he describes as a dark place. The project took him out of this shadow. He also identified some of the different pedagogical approaches at the BCCA and why these worked for the group:

> “You talked to us all on the same level.” (Burton, N: 2019)

[38] Quote from Vita Nova’s circa 1999.

Part 2: Two Guides: Interviews with Inguna Gremze and Jan Morgan

5.2.1 Life –sketch Inguna: Director Latvia

Inguna Gremze, director/practitioner of Children's Theatre Cultural Centre, Riga, Latvia.

Photograph: ©Jordi Robert 2019

I met Inguna at one of John Somers' Exeter University international conferences back in 2002. These conferences were well known and respected in the applied drama world. What Somers set out was a model for intercultural exchange. He created spaces where fruitful and meaningful dialogue took place regarding the development of applied drama. It was in this context that Inguna Gremze had come from Latvia as a practitioner of children's theatre based at Riga's Cultural Centre, Maza Gilde. I had asked John if I could attend part of the conference as it was on social inclusion and he was aware of my work with Vita Nova. I told him about the work with the Penwithen Boys. He said: "Why not bring them?" So, we did. Since our first meeting in 2002 I have remained in contact with Inguna, taking a second group from Penwithen to Riga in 2003 and have been involved in other pieces related to the Baltic festival in connection with Theatre Vinnie.[39] Inguna, although having very good English, due to speaking in a second language, there is purity in the way that she described her Penwithen experience. She was, as could be expected of a drama practitioner, articulate and passionate in her speech.

[39] Children's Youth theatre Vinnie based at Maza Gild Theatre. Named 'Vinnie' after their first production 'Vinnie the zpooh . 'Winnie the Pooh' and 'Vinnie' stuck.

Life-sketch of Inguna:

The interview took place at Vita Nova coinciding with a trip Inguna had made to the UK. I began, in the same way, asking just one request:

> "I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story."

Being a natural storyteller, Inguna began with a few ums and ahs, then she was off:

> "I have to go to back, and remember, that, in 2002, I was, uh, very interesting …in drama, work. And I went to… Exeter University …because I knew that England is a country where they have drama … … I was working with drama with young people in Riga … drama lessons, and I was making theatre, so I went to this Exeter to learn and to meet new people…I was passing one room, where I heard somebody's working … some theatre work is going on. So, I just … went in and look, and I saw boys, very seriously sitting … on the stairs and the director speaking, … and everything was so, so creative and interesting. …I was like just watching … then we start to speak with, with director, who was Sharon Coyne, and she told that they are going to play [perform] tonight. And even before I saw the play, I just feel that it is very good group. I said, can you come to festival in Riga?"

Inguna went on to say she couldn't remember: "how we managed all the things after," but that the group went to Riga in 2002 during midsummer, which she identified as being: "a very big celebration in Latvia." The Baltic Festival was organised to coincide with their midsummer rites, as the thinking was maybe it would be interesting for people from abroad. Inguna then listed the other countries which brought groups to Baltic Bell festival - Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, England, and their own group from Riga. When asked further about the significance of midsummer, Inguna talked passionately about this festival:

> "… in Latvia, we called it …Ligo night, or Jani. … the shortest night and the longest day, which… Latvians celebrated from the very old times…when we believed in pagan gods. And Latvians went out into the woods … all the flowers and trees and their costumes and … singing songs and dancing around the fire."

She explained further the importance of Ligo, saying that it was: "very deep in cultural roots," and that they are a country with "no big factories or rich companies." What Latvia owns, she expressed almost poetically: "We have a sea and we have our culture, and we have our songs. And this is how we can say we are Latvians and show ourselves to world." Inguna continued her narrative reflecting on the fact that in 2002:

> "… everything was new. Because … our, contacts with … other countries, like England was not so deep. And we were looking for new contacts, new people … new theatre work."

She placed this situation by offering a context for the sense of newness she described:

> "This is about history … when we were under Soviet Union … It was … like wall. We couldn't meet people from Europe. We couldn't meet people from all over the world … only inside Soviet Union."

Latvia underwent its second Soviet occupation in 1944-1991. It was 2004 when Latvia joined the European Union. Inguna continued this part of her story by sharing how Latvians had very great expectations from that side of world … that people are different there: "that there are different cultures." Moreover, she spoke of the hope that Latvians held "that this friendship will become more open … and the life will grow better." Inguna then returned to the present day, stating that: "now we are in Europe, now we can go everywhere. Now it's nothing special." She mooted a suggestion that "now the problem is not to lose this cultural feeling … exchanging of culture, we should not be everything the same, we are interesting because we are different." She emphasised this point, by stating that the original purpose of creating the "international theatre festival, Baltic Bell [was] to have this exchange with all this cultural heritage, and especially for young people."

Inguna moved her narrative to how she originally perceived and liked the Penwithen drama group particularly from a gender point of view:

> "It's very difficult to have boys in theatre field, but they were all boys, and very brave boys, very active boys, very open boys… Sharon is working at that time with these boys [so] they can show the best what they have. They showed all their… emotions, energy, it was really strong."

This initial image of the boys was both interesting and surprising to Inguna. In Latvia, theatre groups predominantly comprised girls with a sparsity of male actors. When Inguna was asked to expand on her use of the word brave, she said: "I mean they were not shy. They were not afraid. They were, they were acting like men … I saw … this, attitude from them." Here she identifies that the boys were different from the other youngsters in Latvia because: "they were like adults, little bit. … feeling like big boys," as opposed to the behaviour of the other participants in Latvia who she typified as "I am child, I'm just following my director." This brave attitude impressed Inguna and was an aspect she enjoyed about the lads. Inguna's recollection of their performance of *'Til It All Went Wrong* in the festival was that it had taken place in a "professional theatre … there were lights and everything and sound … and it was full, full house … I remember, people really enjoyed the play."

Inguna then disclosed a particularly significant moment, a recollection of gratitude from one of the boys that has remained with her. It occurred after the young people had been on an excursion into the woods with "activities and food ...and they were playing football and they enjoy very much." The Latvians had been playing with the Penwithen group:

> "…I remember very well… we stayed until dark…because it's midsummer night … we were collecting everybody to bus because we should go back to hotel. One, one boy came to me, and he start to shake my hand and say '*thank you, thank you'*, it's something, I like it. I don't remember of course what every word, that he said. But he was … talking so passionately [laughs] … and I said '*yes, yes'*. And I was glad too because … it was not official thanks, or somehow like, …from adults, but from child, from young boy, who come to me suddenly and shake my hand and say '*thank you thank you.'"*

When Inguna considered the fact that the boys had emotional behaviour problems (EBP), she said that: "I couldn't tell… that they had some behaviour difficulties. They were normal boys." For her, they were just there like the other participants:

> "… doing everything in the way we are expecting in the festival …. they were watching plays; they were showing their play. We had some workshops also … so altogether was like no problem with some, special behaviour."

These thoughts led Inguna to continue her account by giving her view on working with young people:

> "What I think, about this…problem of … behaviour of children, because I work with children a lot … if you put child, in the situation where he knows what he's doing and why he's doing, and this situation is creative for him, then, he cannot be bad. He would … try to do all his best. Then he understands that he is showing himself. He has this … attitude that he's something very special, he is a group from England to show the performance. So why should he be bad? He has everything, he has where to sleep, what to eat. He has interesting people around, he's somebody."

Inguna felt that it was "good that, there is some drama work with such boys." She states that: "It's important to give children possibility to show their character, their best knowledge. Their… physical…movement. And theatre is very good tool to make, to show on the stage." She felt that this was vital as teenagers, mostly boys, want to show themselves somehow this often manifests itself in a "stupid way". However she went on to state that: "theatre sometimes can help them. Depending on the director, so that they are engaged with the work, which must be interesting not boring."

When probed further, Inguna makes it clear that not only was she unaware that the lads had problems, but that she didn't care. What she did care about was: “that they are young people … they are doing the theatre, they are exchanging, and this is the main thing.” She then returned to her previous point: “it's very important to give possibility … for teenager … young person, to be creative and show himself in the very good way.” With these elements bad behaviour isn’t necessary. Inguna expanded on this notion:

> “When the child is ready, to take responsibility about his words, about his actions. Then he is really, in the creative process. He's not like a puppet who is doing something that the director wants … But he understands why he is on the stage, what kind of message he is giving to the audience … he knows, for example in this festival, he is representing England.”

Although she found it difficult to remember many details from that time, what lasted with regard to inviting the English boys to Latvia was:

> “… a feeling that we were doing something good, something new, something interesting. ..that there is a future, and as I understood from Sharon…that we learn from each other. We learned both ways. Latvians learned from English [laughs] people, and English people also learned from Latvians … of course that's why this inter-cultural is so important. And it can really, change something in your thinking … And if you change thinking you can change your life.”

Inguna expressed the reason for attending the international theatre festivals was to share skills and exchange ideas. Although she couldn't remember the boys’ storyline, she did remember that it was: “not comedy. It was something serious … very good, interesting, different.” At this point she becomes a little confused with the second tranche of Penwithen boys who took a play the following year that involved a movement piece.[2]
She reflected on the whole experience and firmly pronounced:

> “I'm very glad that we met in 2002, because it became a very long story afterwards, when we were exchanging with our theatre ideas. …we become friends with Sharon. … she came with other groups also, to Baltic Bell Festival in Riga.”

Inguna outlined the educational thinking in Latvia in regard to developing educational drama within the system. She cited the Penwithen project as an example of how to involve drama:

> "... I think Sharon is a very big specialist in this field. And we can learn from her, a lot. Because, at that time, and still, people think that theatre is … just learn the (script) and go on the stage and play. But drama is something a little different. … this play what they showed us, was like drama. It was, it was like made in drama way. Which was, at that time, new."

When asked to reflect on the Baltic Bell 2002 festival and, in particular, inviting the English group, Inguna got excited and laughed: "It was like adventure. It was not like average day." She said that you never know when you organise an event and create a programme that it will work but, with great satisfaction she said: "I think we did great. And everybody was in this process…everybody was really …in good mood." She couldn't recall anything bad happening. At the "end we were tired…. happy, everything went well [phew]. Super. We will go for next festival."

When relating further about the arrangements for the festival she recalls that the Penwithen Boys stayed "in one dormitory, which was like school. They stayed with their teachers. They weren't to go out at night and they had breakfast there." In her portrayal, Inguna was very much involved with the hospitality aspect of the festival; this was clearly of great important to her. She remembered with satisfaction:

> "That boys were very happy about the food … and where they live… … always when we make festival… we make some excursion … to see country. To see Riga. To, to have some friendship evening also. Where everybody dancing together."

Inguna also noted that there was interaction between the Penwithen boys and the girls at the festival: "They were dancing with our girls and they liked it very much. There were some …exchange in this, um, in this [Tuts] [Laughs], disco night." She also emphasised the inclusion and importance of the closing ceremony at the festival again with food, dancing and singing.

Inguna returned to reflecting upon the drama process that she observed with the Penwithen boys that differed from the script to stage methods in Latvia. Observing that this was partly to do with what she describes as working "with personality … with these young people thinking about some process or some ideas." She identifies that what is produced "is not only director's work, but more "like group work." These differences she notes as something new at that time. She comments that even currently, not many groups in Latvia use devising as an approach. This she infers is because "it takes more time and it's difficult, to make a play from ideas, not just for written play." The narrative returned to the present stating,

“nowadays we want to make drama lessons in Latvia.” She continues explaining that you can’t expect that young people are going to be professional actors, but you can as a director embrace all his possibilities implying that these can be included in the work. Inguna uses the phrase “then he can open and show the best,” alluding that these possibilities may become transformative through drama. She continues her explanation saying how you can work with people’s strengths, what they know, what they can do: “For example, he's good in, in physical theatre; so, he can -- show his idea in physical theatre.” Other examples she suggested included singing and tricks, these talents can be woven into the piece.
Inguna identifies the role of the director - what in applied drama terminology we might refer to as director/facilitator - as: “a director you should put together …like some puzzle. Then it's… real drama process. … you expect something new and very fresh result.”

Inguna added that one of her beliefs in creating the international festival was that participants should speak their own language. When others have challenged her on this, she has argued that the audience can understand what is being presented on stage through what she dubbed: “theatre language. …if it's good theatre language you can understand.” She remembered that in regard to the Penwithen boys attending the festival and needing support, she had asked her theatre group who were good at English. The girls who volunteered became guides and took care of the lads. She also added that flyers were produced with the story of *‘Til It All Went Wrong* translated into Latvian. “Nowadays every festival needs translation. But I think the best is to play in different language, not like choose only one language.” Inguna concluded her story by stating that: “Theatre language speaks, speaks more.”

Reflections and key concepts:

A powerful undercurrent in Inguna’s narrative is tied into a particular era, the shadow of 47 years of Soviet occupation still lingered in 2002. Inguna was searching for connections outside of Latvia. The emphasis on hospitality was integrated within a desire to create friendships with countries beyond what had been the iron curtain. There was a thirst to know other cultures and to share their heritage. The festival was an expression of the freshness and joy in sharing identities; “we are interesting because we are different”. Inguna reflected a sense of loss with the emergence of a homogeneous culture now spreading across countries.

Curiosity regarding applied drama was stimulated through Inguna watching the Penwithen boys perform a devised piece. This was a new experience as in Latvia the emphasis was on script work with the focus on the director as an interpreter. The alternative method she witnessed, was concerned more with the group. In contrast, the applied director/facilitator's role assembled the group's ideas like a puzzle. Through this form of creating work, it is possible to utilise the group's strengths; it can open young people and shift people's thinking.

A motif in Inguna's story is the importance of giving young people possibilities. This principle is at the core of Inguna's practice when working with young people.

Key findings, that emerged from viewing Inguna's interview:

Inguna's interview offers this study an important perspective. She was a complete outsider. It was her first visit to the UK and she knew nothing about the Penwithen Boys. Inguna had come to Exeter with great expectations, to learn about educational drama and to forge cultural exchanges and friendships. In 2002 the UK was seen, not just by Latvia but also in other countries, as a leading centre for Drama in Education (DIE), Theatre in Education (TIE) and Theatre for Development (TfD). The philosophy of DIE was established in the 1950s with the likes of Peter Slade and Brian Way, followed in the 1960s by Dorothy Heathcote's ground-breaking work in the field, involving a philosophy that embraced a child-centred strategy to learning along with the development of emotional intelligence through drama. TIE emerged out of this as a counter to traditional theatre that reinforced the establishment. TIE being a 'theatrical pedagogy sought to encourage young people to participate in the theatre as a learning medium and as a vehicle for social change.' (Nicholson 2009: 19). When Inguna arrived at the conference 2002, educational drama in the UK was already being slowly suffocated.

When informed that the boys had emotional and behavioural problems, she didn't care. For her they were normal boys. Inguna's approach to young people was Freirean for although she may have not made the connection between performance and process drama, she had a strong understanding that giving young people what she described as possibilities was key in their development. For Inguna possibilities are what theatre can offer adolescents where they can use their physicality, energies, and show themselves. She states that theatre is a good tool for this as long as the material is interesting and relevant. Theatre is a vehicle for people to become themselves; a place described by Inguna where "he can open and show

the best." These openings signal an emergence into the public, the audience, as a person; a positive confident statement of ownership of self. When I checked this word, possibilities, for clarity of meaning, in a follow-up phone call with Inguna, she confirmed it was the possibility to challenge their creativity through making their theatre work with others, its sharing via performance to the public. This being an opportunity, for now, the present. It was also the possibility, the offer of performing at a youth festival, and what that affords in terms of connections and celebrating themselves. Significantly Inguna remarked that possibilities also means hope about the future. She explained that with the self-confidence you gain through the theatre process, in the future you can "trust your dreams and not be afraid of the future." That you have proved you are able to "do better things …as a person," that the audience has appreciated. She continued by adding the importance of encouragement, quoting her mother: "With a bad word you can kill it, but with a good word people can take one step, then two steps." The idea of the encouragement, enabling a child or adult to take one step and then another connects with Freire's emphasis on hope. Webb in his analysis of Freire's perception of hope discusses the significance of the notion of homo-viator. He expands on this saying:

> 'Man is taken to be a wayfarer… always and essentially en route.' (Dauenhauer, 1986, pp. 6–7). Each of these themes is incorporated into Freire's conceptualisation of humans as unfinished beings (1998, p. 51), 'beings in the process of becoming,' (1972, pp. 56–57), conscious of their incompleteness and their status as travellers, seekers, searchers, pilgrims. Hope is of fundamental importance in all of this. For Freire, humans are 'eternal seekers. Eternal because of hope' (1998a, p. 58). Without hope, humans would despair in the face of their unfinishedness and would become immobilised. … … It is hope, in other words, that drives us ever onwards as travellers, wayfarers, seekers, in pursuit of completeness. (Webb 2010: 329)

It could be said that the boys in the Penwithen drama group were in a near state of being immobilised by life. Through the process of creating their play, that both engaged and energised them, they became educable. One of their biggest challenges was their inability to complete work. Freire's notion of unfinishedness has deep resonance for them.

> …we search, we are driven to explore, interrogate, question and learn, thus becoming educable. Indeed, 'the matrixes of hope are matrixes of the very educability of beings, of human beings.' (Freire, 2007a: 87). And because we are unfinished, and thus *become* as we learn, the education rendered necessary by our educability attains its political character: (ibid: 329)

Inguna's approach was holistic. It went beyond just inviting young people to a festival but involved nurturing for all the participants. Inguna's entrance into the Penwithen journey was

a perfect collision. What the Penwithen Boys needed more than anything else was to feel welcomed, valued. What Inguna was looking for were contacts and the opportunity to share Latvian hospitality with flowers, music, dancing, fires and a midsummer experience in the darkened woods. The festival's welcome couldn't have fallen on a hungrier group of young people who devoured the gifts they received.

The notion of hospitality, of giving, was central in Somers' ethos in creating international conferences at Exeter University, which in turn allowed for dynamic exchanges. With the Baltic Bell festival, it was the same. Inguna stated that the group had everything they needed: a place to sleep, food and 'interesting people around, he's somebody'. With this combination there is no need for antisocial behaviour.

This chimes with the work I carried out at The Pilsdon Community *(see 1.3.15 p 57)*. Jones in *Utopian Dreams* quotes one of the trustees of Pilsdon who described part of the simple life there being attributed to the community's ability to provide a 'precious thing to meet real needs - for food, shelter, comfort, health and peace and to meet them well; the daily routine of necessary work to that end offers dignity for everyone.' (Jones 2007: 158). Inguna's, philosophy is to offer work that is interesting and, importantly, creative. Once more the relationship with applied theatre to 'purpose' is significant. Here is the opportunity for people to regain their dignity. As Inguna states, when their energies are channelled in a creative endeavour, when they have hospitality, 'they don't need to look for bad ways.'

I remember my dear friend, the late Marcia Pompeo, relating to me, that on one of her travels another international drama practitioner had said to her we are like missionaries. And she passed this on to me. "Sharon, we are like missionaries." She didn't mean it in the religious, dogmatic sense but in how we are driven to work with applied drama to support people in telling their stories, giving them a voice, hospitality, friendship and welcome has got to be a part of that.

Inguna stated that they didn't show any bad behaviour because they didn't need to. They didn't show any bad behaviour because they were not bad kids. They were lost, they had done bad things but essentially these were, as Inguna described them: "very brave boys, very active boys, very open boys." They were serious about making *'Til it all Went Wrong.* Even if they weren't able to articulate it, they had found a way of communicating through drama. Being heard and seen had particular significance for the introverted boys of the group. It was liberating. They had discovered a form of expression that worked for them and gave them confidence. This confidence allowed one of the boys to demonstrate that in

Latvia, he was able to show that he was capable not of the “thuggish” (Stanaway, D: 2018) behaviour Dan ascribed to the group, but the capacity to express gratitude and graciousness when he spontaneously shook Inguna’s hand and thanked her after their midsummer excursion.

The boys had been aware that they were different from the other groups at the festival. However, by the time they made it to Latvia, the boys had taken ownership of their difference and felt confident in it. Inguna perceived they were unlike the other young people and registered it as positive. She could see they were trying to be men. It wasn't just the play that they had devised that differed, it was that they had experienced a great deal in their young lives and without words, this authentic sense, of people who have been through some form of trauma, permeates. I have seen this with many of the groups I have worked with over the years, a gravitas emerges, their life stories etched into their being. Inguna talked about theatre language in regard to having groups speaking in their mother tongue because the emotions in the play will translate to an audience without words. With the boys, their experiences somehow also spoke without words. This is why applied drama is so important; it conveys life’s stories with and without the use of words.

5.2.2 Life Sketch Jan: Assistant Teacher

Interview: Jan Morgan assistant teacher at Penwithen School – now retired.

Photograph: ©Jordi Robert 29.8.20

Life-sketch of Jan:

The interview took place at Jan's home in Bockhampton. I began, as before with the same question:

> "I would like you to tell me your Penwithen story."

Jan has a lovely Dorset accent and sitting comfortably in her summerhouse she began to unfold her story with little hesitation; it was almost a stream of consciousness. She was very aware of my presence and referred to me as you or your frequently. Firstly, Jan stated her role and then brought Eileen quickly into her narrative: "I worked at Penwithen as a teaching assistant and … I worked with Eileen who was my great friend and a marvellous teacher." Jan's deep admiration for Eileen was apparent. Subsequently, she began to trace Eileen's qualities as a teacher saying that she was:

> "…inspirational and always put the students first. And she could come out with brilliant ideas of engaging the… students … … she used to do geography and history and it was never sitting down looking at books, [or] looking at a film."

Jan gave examples of projects Eileen carried out, including one linked to drama where they had made and painted plaster masks. She also outlined how Eileen would offer mixed ability sessions tailor-made for the group she was working with. Significantly, Jan said that the students "were never ever treated as a group," but "always treated as individuals." Jan articulated that Eileen was: "a great person to work with." She would accompany Eileen during the summer holidays to places in preparation for taking the students there later.

Jan spoke of how Vita Nova came to Penwithen with *Scratchin' the Surface*. As she described it, the theatre group "done a drama" and that Eileen had been "very taken up by…what you produced." Jan recalled that the play took place in the school-hall and how she hadn't "any idea what the play was going to be about." Jan recorded that she had been surprised by Vita Nova: "how open they were about … talking about drink and drugs… they were pulling no punches about it." She also reflected on "the reaction of all the Penwithen students." Jan communicated how, after Vita Nova's production, Eileen had come and spoken to me about what she had just seen and this was how "the seed was sown." She revealed that Eileen had wanted "a similar sort of project for some of our boys," and had asked her if she would be interested in the project to which Jan clearly said: "of course I was."

When reflecting on her working relationship with Eileen she said that it was: "quite normal then, [for] most schools … with … children like ours to have both the main teacher and a teaching assistant."

Jan further outlined the atmosphere when working with Eileen as "you worked alongside her." She never placed herself as "the main person" and when it came to being awarded praise, she wouldn't take it for herself but ensured it was either Jan or "the students that she wanted to take the credit." Jan spoke intensely when she recalled her asking if she would like to work on the drama project with her: "I would follow her to the end of the earth and back," she laughingly said because most of Eileen's ideas were "normally pretty bizarre" but importantly "the children always gained something out of it, so who wouldn't want to go with her?"

Jan had assumed that she would pick lads who 'were going to be compliant and easy to manage' for the drama project.

> "But no, Eileen being Eileen [she] picked the ones that were most challenging, the ones that needed a bit more confidence, that didn't have any self-esteem; the ones that never had anywhere to go [and with] no history of drama at all."

On further probing about the selection process, Jan explained that she thought she would opt for students who would be "passive young people that wouldn't embarrass us or start showing off." However, Eileen was deliberate in her choices saying: "I'm going to choose the ones that are going to get something out of it, and to prove that they can do something like this." As a result, students with challenging behaviour, low self-esteem or who came from backgrounds that offered few prospects were identified. Boys who had "never been given the opportunity to show what they could do." Even though it was not what Jan had anticipated she merrily went along with Eileen's decision.

When Jan spoke about the actual project, she said she had wondered how the drama might work at the BCCA:

> "…I can remember you said oh you wanted them to do still images[40] …they had to get in threes and fours and stand there and I thought oh my lord this is going to be terrible because they don't like standing next to one another. But you got them to do it."

She continued, saying that there were times within the workshops "when things went a bit haywire when you'd have to send them out." The lads would go into the yard for a "bit of quiet time." Eileen would go with them, along with those whom Jan called "some of your men." These were volunteer mentors from Vita Nova. She commented on how the mentors would "have a little quiet word" with the lads who would strop about. Jan continued her story by saying that after these hiatuses the students would "do exactly what you wanted them to do and they gradually got to really enjoy it. Although they didn't ... want to admit it."

On asking her for more detail about dealing with haywire moments, Jan said laughingly: "You used to, quite sensibly, have regular breaks for them." However, on the times when some would "start pushing the buttons and not wanting to do what you wanted them to do," a break would be suggested by either Eileen or myself. Outside in the BCCA yard, Jan painted a picture of the adolescent behaviour:

[40] Still image: Drama technique where individuals or groups use their bodies to physically portray make ideas.

> "…they would stomp outside and strut around a bit, and demand that they had their rights … … they weren't going back in. Either someone from Vita Nova would come out or we would go out and chat to them. And because they didn't want to lose face, they would come back strutting."

The boys would announce that they were only going back into the studio for five minutes, then they would be off out again! However, Jan laughingly pointed out that "an hour later they were still there doing exactly what you wanted them to do." She couldn't precisely remember how the play came about. She thought that "you must have spoken to them and decided what was their background, what could they offer?" In recalling events there was a little confusion with the second drama group who went to Latvia in 2004. It was that latter group who had focused on the theme of graffiti, not the 2001/2 one. Jan however remembered clearly concerning the first project that "Danny was really good" and that he liked "taking the lead on things and the others were quite happy for him to do it." She also recalled Dan being good at "backflips and roller skating and, anything that was … going to make him shine." Further reflection on Dan revealed that he "was a really likable student," that she "got on really well with him" and that he never caused her any problems. She felt this was due to how she characterised herself as being an "easy target". There was nothing to be gained for Dan to enter a conflict situation with her. Dan, she clearly remembered always wanted to be the one that was the leader, and the one that came up with ideas. She relayed how, at Penwithen School, he would go out for a break, but if he decided not to go back in "he would make sure none of the others went in, so, they would all stay outside." Jan said of Dan that he always wanted to be "the leader and the kingpin." She followed on from this character observation by pointing out that within the context of the drama project Dan was given a leadership role and that it had worked for him.

Jan also identified another boy whose name she couldn't remember. The lad whom I have used the pseudonym of Nathan. What stood out about him was that he "didn't want to put his hoodie down." She had thought that this was going to cause a problem, but countered this by saying that I had said: "no, he can wear that and can have his hoodie up." Commenting further about Nathan, she stated that many of the students wore their hoodies up because it was "their defence. It's their way of, um, keeping the barriers up." She recalled that when the boys were on stage and doing the drama that I had said: "I want you to take your hoodies off …I want to make sure you've got your hair out the way so we can get a good shot.' This was to film and photograph the rehearsal. Nathan had refused, and Jan thought:

> "Oh dear this is going to be so difficult because he wouldn't do it and you went no, no that's alright, you can keep it up. And he went, oh, alright, that's alright then. And actually, in the … drama, all the way through the play, he kept his hoodie up, and he was really happy then."

Jan then reflected on the storyline of their play: "it was the boys … having a gang and other people coming to join them and … they'd meet up… … one of them started to get involved with drugs." The others knowing this action could ruin where they were going tried to persuade him not to go down that line. Talking of the plot jolted Jan into remembering that:

> "On the stage… They only had like one prop, and that was some wooden steps that they made in the wood workshop [laughs]. And we used to take that with us everywhere."

It is a happy recollection. Jan later added that although she wasn't sure "quite why it was decided to use the steps," except that I had wanted some of them to be sitting in the play, she said that it worked really well and that the steps were the focal point. The boys were set the task of creating them which entailed going back to Penwithen and getting the woodwork teacher to help them. The teacher tried to get them to do it but "all they wanted to do was do the graffiti on it and not do the actual building of it." Jan was thankful it was only the steps that the boys were asked to make as she wasn't sure if they would have managed anything else. However, the steps took on an emblematic significance, going everywhere with the boys. Jan chronicled how when it came to loading the minibus to take the play out: "the steps would have to get in first, and then the lads would have to clamber around after them." Whatever school or venue they travelled to: "the steps had to come out, then they'd have to put them on stage and they got protective over those steps and they knew exactly what position they had to go in."

She then marvelled at how the whole project came together: "I was amazed how it all worked. And how successful you managed to get these lads, who didn't have any background in … drama or performance." She added that they started to take their play into schools and "I think we went to your old college where you studied." It was at Exeter University that the group was invited to Latvia. Jan remarked that at the time she "didn't even know where Latvia was" although Eileen did. Over-riding this she had thought: "What an amazing opportunity for the lads." Even though the boys were also unaware of the existence of Latvia, they were keen to go, although none of them had passports. Obtaining them was a massive undertaking. Jan later recounted how difficult it was for them both pointing out that under normal circumstances it is a complicated process but in this case:

> "Especially [so] when some of them weren't sure of their… previous names or who their fathers were …some did get the passports done with their parents but most of the time we had to do the forms for them, and get the photos done."

After talking about the difficulties of organising the trip, including persuading the headteacher of the project's value, Jan returned to the tour of '*Til It All Went Wrong* recalling:

> "…some of the schools we went to were where the boys used to be before they came to Penwithen, and so they felt really proud of being able to go back and say 'Yes, this is me, I've managed to achieve this.'"

After this part of Jan's story, there was again a little confusion over the drama groups. The hip-hop dancer she remembered had been involved in the second tranche of Penwithen boys. Jan then moved the story back to the original group, with a strong evocation of their Latvian accommodation being in:

> " like an old apartment and, there was a Russian lady, that was downstairs and we arrived quite late in the morning and she made us all black coffee, in this little — stairwell. And we didn't understand what she was saying, she didn't understand us, but I can remember her making this big pot of black coffee for us all."

Developing this memory Jan recalled that the place they stayed in was: "like grey concrete and it was like these big stairwells you went up and concrete steps, and the rooms were very basic…the lads all had [to] share rooms... …" She reminisced how the Russian lady "was very protective over the building. And she was very, very protective over us." Talking about this triggered another Latvian recollection:

> …people kept giving our boys flowers. And they were peonies. And, it's not very good for their image, to be seen walking around with flowers. Pink blossoms. So, they would give them to us. And when we got back, the Russian lady gave us like milk bottles or cartons and we filled them up with water and we had …them in our bedrooms.

She also recalled the magnificent building that was the Maza Gild theatre where the festival was held and that there were students and youths from Lithuania. Jan couldn't remember all the countries. She went on with the story saying how the boys had "done their performances and [that] our boys got to know some of them." She also recalled that the Latvians took them to:

> "…different places when we weren't rehearsing or performing. We were given [tuts] so much money to go and buy our lunch. And so, we went into the local restaurants …to our shame we couldn't speak their language. They could speak our language

> perfectly. And one of the girls that came to serve wanted to practise her English, and it was perfect. And she went and got her cousin or sister, that was out washing up, and she came out and she wanted to practise her English … it makes … you feel a little bit humble when you've got people working in a restaurant that can speak your language perfectly."

Jan then said: 'Most of the time I do believe our boys were absolutely wonderful and we were very, very well looked after. And their performance was brilliant." Asking her to elaborate about her use of wonderful, on reflection she firstly recalled that it had been difficult for them to champion the drama project at the start.

> "Eileen and I had to defend ... what we were doing, [with] this project, when we went back to Penwithen because … the other staff just thought we were off on a jolly somewhere. She went on to explain that it wasn't until they started to take the play with me to "different schools and theatres that they actually believed we were doing something."

Jan finished her narrative by communicating that she "felt immensely proud of the boys, and at their maturity."

Reflections and key concepts:

The overriding sense from Jan's interview is one of deep respect and affection for the work of her colleague Eileen. She saw in her teaching qualities that gave young people real opportunities in life. It was clear that this deeply committed duo of teacher and assistant worked very powerfully, not just for the boys but also for themselves. Jan observed the alchemy that took place within the applied drama project that led them to not only performing in the schools that some had been expelled from, but also took them to a Baltic country. As we are talking over 18 years ago when both Penwithen drama groups went to Latvia, it is not surprising that, at a couple of points, Jan confused the first drama group with the second tranche.

Key findings that emerged from viewing Jan's interview:

What is of major significance about this interview is that it comes from a person who knew the boys intimately, except for Darren who was a non Penwithen Boy. Jan, like Eileen, experienced the daily rigor of working in an EDP school with all the turbulence that could be produced by an assembled group of lads who were deeply troubled and traumatised by events in life, some self-inflicted, some inflicted on them, and some both.

In her narrative, it is clear that their working relationship was very important. In the context of working in an institution such as Penwithen, survival over a long period hinges on the cooperation and mutual support of staff.

Teaching and Care:

Jan's portrait of Eileen is of her being a wonderful teacher, and through her narrative vital elements shine out about what that meant from her perspective. Eileen offered strong ideas that engaged the students, a kinesthetic strategy, which involved getting students to do things. Eileen understood that most of her students needed to express their emotional intelligence through doing, making and that a one size fits all method wasn't appropriate. She prepared her lessons according to the pupils she worked with:

> "…one set of lessons for a couple of children and another set of lessons for another, so that they could all engage. And, most of it was like practical, going out, doing something, doing their own little projects."

What Eileen was doing was working on the young people's strengths. The trips and visits that she organised were enriching those young people, many of whom had very limited experience beyond their own environments. What Eileen was offering was cultural capital . It was this ethos that led her to bringing the young people to work with me at the BCCA and, ultimately, Latvia. Her work was rooted in a child-centred approach. Eileen's knowledge of her students allowed her to see the potential of an applied drama project with her young people after witnessing how Vita Nova connected with the Penwithen audience. Her selection process exhibits a deep understanding of what was needed for her students. Thinking back, when I worked with the lads on making '*Til It All Went Wrong* now reminds me of an almost Wizard of Oz situation. The boys possessed all the qualities they wanted but they just didn't realise it. Eileen was clear; not only did she want to make sure they would gain something from the experience but crucially that they would be able "to prove that they can do something like this." Applied drama offers physical testimony that it is possible to achieve. The public aspect of performing, especially for those who have been excluded, I believe is pivotal to their development. I described a similar occurrence when talking of Vita Nova. When we finally performed *Scratchin' the Surface* at BCCA in April 1999, it had a greater significance than simply as a premiere of a play for young people. For the group it was a celebration, a ritual, a surfacing from the shadowlands and into the light of the community. It was an assertion that this was our story and this is who we are.

> ‘The play has allowed us to express our collective experiences in a positive light, and given us the opportunity to put something back into the community.’
> (David, VN, 20.5.99) (Coyne 2007: 69)

Eileen, in picking those with challenging behaviour and low self-esteem or coming from a background where they’d never been given the opportunities, as Jan pertinently observed, this meant that they were able through the project ‘to show what they could do.’ They needed this public display to convince themselves that they could complete and make something of worth and value. As highlighted previously in Inguna’s interview, she observed when she first saw the boys in rehearsal in Exeter that: “Sharon is working ... with these boys [so] they can show the best what they have.” Dan in 2002 had summed up the drama project in a quote I have referred to before: "For the first time we created something instead of destroying something".

Regarding the starting point for the drama, they undertook at the BCCA, as facilitator I had asked: “what can you do? What are you good at? What do you want your play to be about?” Dan could do a backflip so it was included in the piece. Jan identified that Dan wanted to be the leader, the kingpin. In other circumstances, this had got him into trouble. Within the drama context his personality, his ego was taken into account and acknowledged in the work. In the drama, Jan had noted that I had encompassed his personality in the piece “in the play… you gave him that position.” She said it proved to be a positive move as Dan did “exactly what he was supposed to be doing, but he was acting.”

Likewise, Nathan, the lad with the hoodie, was permitted to wear it as part of his character Dopey in the play. With applied drama, there is an allowance for people to be themselves in the safety of the fiction. Here were two polar opposites, probably both exhibiting extreme traits due to abandonment issues. Both were hostel boys. An introvert and an extrovert. Both being allowed to feel comfortable in the drama work through the allowance of what was needed for them at that time in their lives.

Brian Way in *Development in Drama* states:

> Education is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for its intangibility and its measurability. ‘No two people are alike’ may well be an accepted truism of physical appearance, but it is equally true of emotion and imagination, which comprise the root of all individuality, and yet often the antithesis

> of academic education, which invariably (because of tests and examinations) tend to be concerned with this sameness rather than the differences of people. The differences are often most clearly reflected through the arts, and the opportunity for actually 'doing' the arts is that sometimes the wisest way of developing individuality.
> (Way 1997: 8)

The drama soaked up and celebrated the individual personalities in their play '*Til it All Went Wrong*. Jan and Eileen's strong partnership enabled the project to happen. Eileen for Jan was a leader, a visionary, but at the same time, as Jan said: "You worked alongside her; she was never the main person." The partnership they modelled was Freirean co-intentionality. There was equality, a dialogue. Both of them were seeking the greater good for the lads, "our boys", as Jan referred to them. Her comment: "I would follow her to the end of the earth and back," illustrates, alongside her spirit of adventure, the faith she had in Eileen's ability.

Their deep care and resilience are exemplified with the issue of getting the passports for the lads so they could travel to Latvia. Jan and Eileen's act of love in arranging for the trip adheres to Freire's thoughts on intervention:

> When I speak of education as intervention, I refer both to the aspiration for radical changes in society in such areas as economics, human relations… … to education. And to health. (Freire 1998: 99)

These massive areas that Freire talks of were all addressed in a micro way by the actions of these two teachers and the gestalt experience of the drama project.

There was an acceptance by Eileen, Jan, and the team at the BCCA that the boys didn't want to lose face. It was about working with a group of adolescent boys who were angry and temperamental, yet fragile, all at the same time. It was seeing beyond the behaviour that Jan humorously described as "strutting about". When they had made a strong dramatic statement, saying they had had enough and walked out of the studio, it was, of course, difficult for them to re-enter the space. Alongside the facilitator's concern with the actual play-making process, there is also the need for diplomacy; this is not often referred to, but is a huge part of applied theatre work, negotiating, starting, and restarting many times over. One of the main aspects of the Penwithen project, which I have talked about earlier, was the use of the Vita Nova mentors, "your men" as Jan referred to them. They would be part of the mediation process, talking the young people down, around, and ultimately back into the

studio. In the drama arena patterns of behaviour can be broken by the allowance of new beginnings and restarts.

Jan was surprised that the lads did do what was asked of them, such as making the *still- images.* This was I believe because they could operate in a different space, that was a professional, designated theatre space and surrounded by people who expected them to achieve. They saw it was something they could accomplish. In the case of the *still- images*, the mentors worked alongside the boys as equals which gave them confidence. When they shared their *still- images*, no speaking was involved. It was an echo of that same modelling with Eileen and Jan. I was leading and shaping the drama project but very much alongside the team. All of us had our part to play. Like Eileen's methods of doing at school, this was another practical activity. It was investigating through drama a subject matter they knew about, the pressures of being a young person, and falling in with the wrong crowd. The drama project provided the right medium to reverse Eileen's concern that the lads had "never been given the opportunity to show what they could do."

The Stairs:

The use of the single prop, the stairs, which Jan identifies clearly in her interview was constant throughout the play. The stripping down of set and props meant that the focus was on the actors. The steps took on importance for the group. Not unlike Nathan with his hoodie, the stairs gave the group an anchor and security. They were a consistent symbol of their play. Creating that space gave them confidence. Carting the stairs around became a form of ritual, a totem. From a theatre point of view, it was a vehicle to identify status, hierarchy, who in the gang sat where. Dan in his interview laughingly refers to them as "those damned steps."

Jan spoke of how she hadn't heard of Latvia before. Her strong impression, unlike the boys, was a domestic one. She focused on the Russian woman who made them coffee in a stairwell of the concrete building they stayed in. Interestingly she remarked how the lady was "very protective over the building. And she was very, very protective over us." This echoes the sense of hospitality that came through in Inguna's interview - the welcome laid out for the boys from the west. This care impacted on the group. Another strong recollection for Jan, which she described as humbling was the discovery in a restaurant, that in Latvia, a place that she and the boys had never heard of, people knew the English language very well.

She recalled that the boys were given flowers. The flower-giving was a motif of the Latvian Festival of Love. The boys hadn't destroyed the pink blossoms and peonies; they had given them to their teachers. Jan and Eileen had improvised with milk bottles to keep the flowers alive in their rooms. There was an example of the boys in Latvia discovering that they could do things differently. They didn't want to lose face by walking around with flowers but they found a way of making their gift into another gift for their teachers, who graciously accepted them.

How often do drama teachers or facilitators have to justify what they do? Jan and Eileen had to defend what they were doing as some people had interpreted their going in a minibus from Weymouth to Boscombe as: "Off on a jolly somewhere." Instead, they were engaged in an important mission, giving those lads life-changing opportunities.

2002 The 'famous stairs'. Photograph: ©Martin Coyne

Chapter Six: A Path Home

Leading on from the last chapter I present the significant findings that emerged from viewing the interrelationships between the life-sketches of Darren, Dan, and Nick. This forms the core of my research.

Added to this primary inquiry, I include another layer of understanding arising from the life-sketches of Inguna and Jan. A final layer of perception springs from reference to the micro semi-structured interviews I conducted towards the end of my investigation. (*See Chapter 2: 2.4.1 p67 & 2.4.5 p71*).

Although I have divided my key discoveries into sections, they inevitably seep across and interrelate with each other.

6.1. The impact on individuals of being excluded from the mainstream, and labelling.

It is clear in all three interviews that the impact of their being excluded from mainstream - or what Nick describes as being normal school - had a profound impact on their adolescent lives.

Seventeen years on, they all referred to this fact early on in their narratives. It was a subject they returned to at various times throughout their interviews. In the article *Removing the threat of exclusion in schools: creating inclusive educational environments* Frizell and Woodger refer to correspondent Sally Weale's report in *The Guardian*. Weale clearly identifies the insidious effects of exclusion:

> School exclusion is damaging for the whole community, reinforcing attitudes of intolerance and prejudice. There is no evidence supporting the notion that exclusion serves as an effective deterrent, neither is there evidence that the threat of exclusion promotes cooperative behaviour. In fact, exclusion further ostracises young people who are already struggling with a sense of belonging. (Weale: 2019).

Shockingly this article was written in 2019, yet the Penwithen drama project began in 2001. Eighteen years later the whole issue of exclusion rumbles on leaving a trail of dysfunction. Weale states that 'exclusion is still widely used as a disciplinary action within our education system'. She goes on to reveal in her article that between 2017-2018 there were '7,905 permanent exclusions in England' along with '… thousands more informal exclusions happening either through managed moves, or pupils being 'off-rolled' into home education' (Weale: 2019).

It was apparent that the labels constructed around Darren, Dan, and Nick affected their confidence, self-esteem and ability to complete work and other aspects of their lives. All the boys at Penwithen were 'statemented' with particular learning difficulties. The medical model is discussed by Brady in her Ph.D. thesis:

> Diagnostic labels can also be regarded as a constraint as they create categories. More importantly, they may limit our view of children, by focusing on their deficits or impairments. Labels draw attention to what children cannot do, rather than the things they do well. As McCubbin and Cohen remind us 'People with labels that identify them as different in a negative way are usually stigmatized' (1999:87) and attention is not given to their positive strengths. (Brady 2004: 214)

Nick describes Penwithen as for troubled children with a variety of conditions such as ADHD, but he identifies himself as having anger issues. Dan's account is similar: "difficult school… a lot of people with a range of different problems and abilities and whatnot." Interestingly, Dan carries with him to the present day the fact that he was not diagnosed with ADHD, obliquely suggesting that this knowledge would have helped to make sense of some of his behaviour. The word naughty, to describe their behaviour, is apparent in both Dan and Nick's stories. Dan uses other adjectives such as thuggish English lads and includes a full-blown trail of negatives to explain why they were at Penwithen School.

> …thugs, we were loud, aggressive verbal teenagers angry - difficulties learning, difficulties with family problems coming from all sorts of backgrounds from foster care to adoption; nowhere else could cope with us, so we had to go to this one place. (Stanaway, D: 2018)

Dan also alludes to the disciplinary approach of Penwithen School when the pupils *kicked off*. He used the words restrained and solitary room. He also demonstrated that the effect of their being excluded caused them to be perceived negatively: "People looked at us and thought [they're from the] *naughty boys' schools'."* (Stanaway : 2018).
Sociologist Howard Becker who is 'credited with the most influential formulation of labelling theory posits that:

> …deviance is not an intrinsic feature of behaviour. Acts and individuals are not inherently deviant until some social groups can successfully define them that way. Labelling theory here builds from the symbolic interactionist tenet that people define and construct their identities from society's perceptions of them. Social groups project rules and definitions onto otherwise neutral behaviours to create deviance. (Shulman 2005:2)

There are questions arising from the accuracy of labelling theory, in particular, its tendency towards oversimplification and 'for not paying enough attention to sources of structural power in capitalistic societies that ostensibly embed labels' (*ibid:* 3). However, Becker identifies the imbalance within society for those individuals who are perceived as deviant and are labelled thus. Becker's questions are necessary for challenging structures within society; 'what rules are to be enforced, what behaviour recorded as deviant and which people labelled as outsiders must… be regarded as political questions.' (Becker 1963:7). Importantly Becker highlights how labelling can influence people's paths into their future lives.

> One consequence of labelling people deviant is increasing the likelihood of future deviant behaviour. Labelling theorists suggest a sequential shift from *primary* to *secondary deviance*. When people are initially labelled deviant, society treats them differently—with greater suspicion and restrictions—and with lower tolerance for any further offenses. The pejorative labels ['addict,' 'juvenile delinquent,' 'prostitute'] that deviants receive may prevent them from being successfully integrated into society. (Shulman 2005:2)

I have witnessed the effects of the labelling process that Becker identifies. Groups I have worked with, in particular members of Vita Nova, have been damaged and stigmatised by such categorisation. It is another reason why Vita Nova identified with the Penwithen Boys and wanted to support them. The mark of exclusion stays. The name of your school or the fact you have a criminal record can impact on your future.

The notion of exclusion and labelling being linked to socio-political issues is also born out when considering cultural capital theory. In *Theories of Inclusive Education,* the findings of Smith's (2000) study into 'why working-class boys are so overrepresented in special education' which included EBP students, cites '… the theoretical model provided by sociologist, Bourdieu as giving insight into the problem. Smith's observations were documented in 2000, just one year before the beginning of the Penwithen Boys project.

> Bourdieu argues that the differential range of educational outcomes/attainments of pupils belonging to different social groups is largely due to the discontinuity between home and school experienced by members of these groups. More widely he emphasises that schools are not culturally neutral and objective institutions but, rather, promote the culture of the dominant classes. He also employs the metaphor of the various forms of capital, in order to show how value may be ascribed to the various cultural forms within society, in order to make the argument as to how cultural differences are interpreted as cultural deficiencies within the schools and may thus lead to differential educational attainments relating to the membership of various groups**.** (Clough *et al*, 2001:154)

The notion of Bourdieu's cultural capital is further described in *The Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA)* as a vehicle to:

> …explain how power in society was transferred and social classes maintained. Karl Marx believed economic capital [money and assets] dictated your position in a social order. Bourdieu believed that cultural capital played an important, and subtle role. For both Marx and Bourdieu, the more capital you have the more powerful you are. (The Cultural Learning Alliance (CLA) 2019)

For Bourdieu, cultural capital is associated with 'familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society' often referred to as 'high culture' (*ibid*). The notion of cultural capital, or lack of it, is useful when viewing the Penwithen project. At 14/15 years-old all seven boys had been separated from mainstream education and branded with a range of labels. Nick alludes to the fact that he has had more life experience, cultural capital, as he has been to Spain but he was clearly aware that some of the lads had not even been outside of Weymouth. Dan notes that Latvia was his first experience abroad. Nick says of the others: "I think it was just a shock to them to see, there is other places other than where they live." Questions arise when contemplating cultural capital: who has access to high culture, who is included in the party? Nick may have been to Spain, but like the rest of the group he was limited in recognised cultural experiences. All the drama group possessed hard-lived human experiences, some of which were very damaging, but these kinds of experiences are not rated in terms of cultural capital.

Michel Foucault's theory of power posits that knowledge and power are intimately bound up. So much so, that he coined the term 'power/knowledge' (Pollard 2019). The boys' situation of being removed from mainstream education, being assessed with EBP and their involvement with the justice system positioned them in a much bigger frame of societal exclusion.

> Every exercise of power depends on a scaffold of knowledge that supports it. And claims to knowledge advance the interests and power of certain groups while marginalising others. In practice, this often legitimises the mistreatment of these others in the name of correcting and helping them. (*ibid*)

Once an individual has been categorised and becomes a label, a type, they can begin to lose their identity and become *objects* rather than *subjects*. Foucault significantly spoke about the role of psychiatry in modern criminal justice and its method of categorizing individuals who **'**resemble their crime before they commit it**' (**Michael *et al*, 2014: 103). Foucault illustrates further the implications of categorisation that lead to a form of dehumanization:

> …how and why defining the normal and the pathological and how these categories invested with power/knowledge shaping nineteenth century institutions — from the prison system to the family — meant to deal in particular with **'**monstrosity**'**, whether sexual, physical, or spiritual. (*ibid*: 103)

Darren, Dan, and Nick had internalised their given positions in society. At the time of the drama project in 2002, Nick and Dan labelled themselves as "nightmares" and "little terrors". Nick understood his exclusion as being rejected from normal school - *ipso facto* he entered an institution that was abnormal.

> …different to other kids because obviously you're not in a 'normal school' so there must be something… you do end up living in your own shadow. (Burton, N: 2019)

The self-assimilation of being removed from what was regarded as the social norms was played out for Darren in his words:

> I wasn't in mainstream education ... So, the majority of my time was spent with, with older people really … … So, there is, blurred lines between ... age groups, you know? … I was interested in a lot of things which weren't necessarily healthy for me, or good for me… … things were very chaotic, for me personally (Attard, D: 2018).

The separation from mainstream and the ingestion of negative stereotypes, led to non-completion of projects; a sense of abandonment, failure, taking a toll on their confidence and exhibiting itself in dysfunctional behaviour. Nick's metaphor of shadow within him, a dark place, is important as it signifies a deep sense of shame. Shame is a toxic emotion. Dan had felt ostracized, calling the Penwithen Boys on the edge of society. People, he said, would avoid him because they 'couldn't understand his behaviour'. Significantly Dan revealed:

> I always felt I was to blame. So, my behaviour meant I had to go to Penwithen, my behaviour meant I had to go into foster care - my behaviour - do you know what I mean? So …everything I had done I had been destroying everything around me, so this is what I was lumped with, tough - you can't behave, this is where you've got to go. (Stanaway: 2018).

When I was working through Dan's transcript in 2019, I had his words in mind when I ran a workshop with Vita Nova.

There is always a lot of chat at these workshops and I found myself telling the participants about my studies, as there was a connection with Vita Nova - i.e., if Vita Nova hadn't taken *Scatchin' the Surface* to Penwithen School the project would never have happened. I then found myself quoting Dan saying how he 'felt he was to blame'. One of the members of Vita

Nova, Bartos, spoke out - he had been homeless for several years, he identified completely with Dan's situation. He too had completely incorporated into his belief system that he was to blame for everything. What a weight for people to carry. Foucault, however, offers hope within his 'power/knowledge' framework:

> An important feature of his theory is that where there is power there is also always resistance. So there are always "sites of resistance": spaces that hold out the promise for a reconfiguring of power relations in a way that might redress oppressive institutions and practices. (Pollard 2019)

The drama project became a 'site of resistance'. The project offered, on one level, an opportunity to adjust their lack of cultural capital. For the lads, the rapid infusion of cultural capital within the project was extensive, not just going to T*he Baltic Festival of Love,* but the work at the BCCA, the tour of their play, the wide range of different people they encountered in schools, at the hotel with the British Council and at the Exeter University conference.

Map Notes: Levels of understanding.

I spoke to Inga Baibakova for the first time since 2002. Then she had been a 17-year-old volunteer guide and interpreter from Theatre Vinnie. Her words coincided with festival director Inguna Gremze's approach to the lads from England that: "They were normal boys." Inga had been told by Eileen Clews that the boys had come from: "a very special school and I didn't see it. Honestly, it's, you know, brilliant… … we got along really well." For her they were "sweet boys a bit naughty… we saw teenagers who like us liked theatre." There is a suggestion here of a possible different cultural response from the Latvians, who didn't appear to be interested in labels. There is instead a more accepting approach to the boys. Both Inguna and Inga use the word normal in relation to the group. At the time the boys had been convinced by their journeys that they were far from normal. They had felt abnormal. Inga described the festival as: "fantastic equality and like ... welcome to everybody." Could there be a correlation between a Marxist approach, as residue from communism, and an entrenched class system and capitalist viewpoint?

Inga spoke articulately, as now a professional film producer, of how in her youth the importance of cultural capital was embedded within her development. Through her youth theatre -Theatre Vinnie - she had travelled to other Baltic countries for festivals, in contrast to the Penwithen Boys' lack of travel. My most recently found Penwithen boy, David, also

stated that Latvia had been his first visit abroad. Inga described how: “for me, every single foreign trip I did with the theatre enriched my life.” She went on to say that it is by experiencing other places that you learn how societies organise themselves. She had been excited as a teenager to meet the boys from England and have the opportunity and challenge: “to practise the language, it was a big thing.” She had a great curiosity to meet people who were English-speaking and a thirst to know about other cultures. Inga’s expression of the richness of culture she experienced as a young person forms an interesting juxtaposition to the boys’, now men's, recollection that the Latvians were not materially wealthy. She remembered that there was a cultural issue when she was translating for the boys. She had constantly said to them the words *can you* when she wanted them to do something. The boys interpreted this as a command. The boys didn't like to be told what to do; but they had talked and come to understand it wasn't a command but a grammar issue. This is why exposure to other cultures is so important as it creates dialogue. Inga’s viewpoints echo the positive findings of the DICE report, particularly regarding *Cultural expression.*

(*See Chapter 3: 3.1)*

It had been ten years since I had spoken to Graham who had been a Vita Nova mentor for the group. His reaction to the question: “Has anything changed you?”

> …I think working with young people with emotional and behavioural problems, like I have been through that system myself and it made me really realise like, the labels put onto young people. How important it is to have the right staff around them. I still have a resentment with some of the staff who were not equipped to deal with these kinds of lads. (Lambert: 2020)

Graham had a deeply troubled younger life, not unlike the Penwithen Boys, and was taught in a similar institution. It is interesting that the notion of labelled, now at 45 years is still significant for him, as was how he felt about the importance of getting the right people to work with disaffected young people. There is a sense of anger still there, not just for himself and the Penwithen boys but all young people who find themselves stigmatised.

6.2. Subculture

In 2002, the drama group’s own cultural references did not fit easily into the recognised social norms. They were involved in a subculture, which was expressed in their music, dress, and in turn, reflected the rap scene. Darren spoke of how they presented themselves: “We were there with ridiculously oversized chains, and beanie hats and baggy jeans and

smoking." Whereas Dan noted that: "because we weren't kids, we were young teenagers, so we were the nuts, … we had our own language our own ways of doing things." Within the project, the applied drama approach had the capacity to validate the group's subculture and reshape it into theatre and enabling the boys to have a voice. Drama offered a relevant platform for them to express themselves. In particular, all three included the influence of rap in their stories, with particular reference to artist Tupac. The allowance for their music to be played in rehearsal, woven into the play, and the space to create their own rap was exciting for them. Their original rap, *I'm trapped inside this cage in a world full of rage,* amplified their sense of feeling stuck, imprisoned. For Nick, it was Darren's enthusiasm for rap music that gave him a lifetime interest in this particular genre. The inclusion of rap not only endorsed their interest in music but also gave them status, as being the ones who held the knowledge; what Dorothy Heathcote coined as 'mantle of the expert'. Rap music made their project cool and fun which in turn gave an allowance for the boys to invest in the work on the production without losing face. As Nick stated in his story: "Everyone thought they were a big-time rapper at the time. As kids do."

A dimension of negative labelling is a reaction by many young people to adopt an anti-work ethic. I remember one girl, from a Pupil Referral Unit, announcing with pride on her first visit to the centre for a drama project W*e Don't do Work*. This persona is hard to break. Freire illuminates this state of mind that oppressed people can absorb:

> …they prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfreedom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom.
> (Freire 1970: 51)

There is an irony, in the fact that this group of white lads, some of whom held reactionary opinions, were buying into and appropriating rap, a black genre of music. The nature of rap music is that it is strong, defiant, and often strongly masculine. Balliu, identifies part of the attraction of rap music for young people:

> For youths all around the world, rap has provided them with a frame in which they can critically analyse the world and voice opinions (Morgan 2009: 6). The music is often considered as an exchange of true information and insider knowledge that sometimes can take the shape of social protest. (Balliu 2015: 18)

Balliu in a later part of her thesis, focuses on the American labelling of White Trash which is used to describe:

> Whites who are not part of the middle class get labelled as "rednecks", "hillbillies" or White trash. According to Babb, "white trash is typically reserved for whites whose lives are spatially and culturally closest to those of blacks". She goes on to explain in terms of spatiality that the terms redneck and hillbilly are generally associated with people living in rural environments, and therefore, not fitting for inhabitants of the inner-cites.
> (ibid XXXX)

Although the young men in the drama group were British, there are some parallels in this particular labelling, as to where they were placed in society. They were all from rural environments and did not fit into the middle-class norms. Along with black rapper Tupac, they also used the music of rapper, the king of hip–hop Eminem within their production of '*Til it All Went* Wrong. He is reported to have used rap music as an outlet to express his frustration, anger, and love for language. White rappers, including Eminem, have been criticised as culture stealers. However, he is also credited with his ability to demonstrate credibility when rapping about suffering, revealing in his music an authentic street image; that spoke of his own disadvantaged youth (*ibid:* 55). Certainly, the Penwithen boys related to the music, as it spoke to them. Their play '*Til It All Went Wrong* opened with a film montage and Eminem's track *Lose Yourself.*

Look
If you had
One shot
Or one opportunity
To seize everything you ever wanted
In one moment
Would you capture it
Or just let it slip?
(Lyrics © Eminem)

Map Notes: Levels of understanding.

Jan Morgan, the boys' teaching assistant acknowledged an understanding of the boys not wanting to lose face when they played up in rehearsals at the BCCA. Certain allowances needed to occur to let the boys re-enter the workspace. So fragile, yet so loud were their egos. Applied drama has a role to play in permitting a space where restarting, mistakes, stumbling, and what Freire names as 'unfinishedness' can occur in a safe venue.

However exhausting the “OK let's start again,” may be for the facilitator and team, they are vital for progress, if a state of completion is to be achieved.

Inga after such a long lapse of time remembered clearly and with a re-found teenage excitement that the Penwithen Boys had presented a piece that had rapping and was UK street culture.

6.3. Trust.

Within the frame of making a play that embraced a co-intentional pedagogy, the boys were free to speak about their experiences with drugs, shoplifting, and contact with the police. The project allowed them firstly to confide in each other: “We started to trust each other a bit more … and became really quite close friends because we knew each others’ little secrets.” (Stanaway, D: 2018). Secondly, through the safety of the fiction they created, they had the confidence to share their story with an audience. Dan, in his interview, revealed an understanding of this process… “We were sharing some quite powerful secrets about ourselves with each other and when we sat down and chatted … a lot of the things in the production were what happened to us.” He went on to say that:

> There was context put around it to make it more drama-ish more like a show; but within their play were elements of what had happened to us in the past or we had witnessed through our childhoods, growing up. (Stanaway, D: 2018)

Dan’s use of the word ‘context’ is important. It unveils his understanding, that a form of theatrical distance was placed to protect them. Dan also identified that their play consisted of a:

> … story that wasn’t about one of us individually but it’s bits of our lives … how we interpreted what we’d seen in our young lives - a lot of us have or had quite difficult upbringings, quite disruptive [pause] childhoods and obviously going to the school was part of that, umm, and it gave me certainly a way of venting some of the frustrations of childhood. (Stanaway, D: 2018)

Here Dan is describing that what took place within the project had a dual purpose for him. Firstly, therapeutic - a form of release and, secondly, the common endeavour of creating a piece of theatre. He further explained the dichotomy of sharing their life stories publicly, whilst maintaining their anonymity, because those narratives were wrapped and protected in a fiction.

> I was never able to talk directly about it, so putting it into a piece of drama, that was about everything, but no one actually knew it was about me personally. (Stanaway, D: 2018)

Somers illustrates this phenomenon: 'By entering the fictional world created in the drama, we may gain greater understanding of our own, personal narrative'. (Somers, 2008:63) The sense of freedom that Dan had to express himself is also articulated by Somers:

> By knowing that the dramatic experience is not real we can release ourselves safely into it. We are 'in' it enough to care about it, but 'out' of it enough not to fear it and to be able to recognise its distance from reality *(ibid*: 63)

Working on something, together, that explored their personal lives led to trust. The boys moved from being a collection of individuals into becoming a team. Darren, Dan, and Nick all remarked on this particular outcome of the project. Darren referred to how they became a cohort, whereas Dan calls them a band of brothers, a brotherhood and Nick: "You went as six, seven separate people, and after the first few weeks we were coming back as a seven unit." The boys forged a new identity through the drama workshops and the performing of '*Til it All Went* Wrong. The unifying effect of creating something they were proud of offered them solidarity, strength and a voice. It engendered a sense of belonging. This was critical for a group who had suffered various forms of rejection and abandonment. Darren, who felt he didn't fit in, Dan who felt he was seen as being on the edge of society and Nick who regarded himself as not being quite right. They became strong enough to take their play back to Penwithen, a school for boys with Emotional Behaviour Problems, where they had been teased for doing a drama project and perform for their fellow pupils. The other lads admired them and, as a result of the play, confided in them, wanting: "to talk about it and I could give them a bit of advice and chat to them, I think it opened people up a bit in school." (Stanaway, D: 2018). They became unlikely role models.

Map Notes: Levels of understanding.

David, who I had last seen in 2002, was one of the Penwithen drama group. He was, like Dan, a hostel boy. In our micro semi-structured interview, he reiterated and substantiated the significance of working on relevant material; how they created characters that had similar backgrounds to themselves. That their play about drugs and alcohol got that message out there. Importantly that as a group they had bonded in the making of *'Til it all Went Wrong*.

> We all came together even though we all had different backgrounds …we all had little parts in the play. The fact that we managed to tell our story and come together and we became good friends after that. It brought us together. (Bishop:2020)

Part of gaining trust with a group is forming a safe and welcoming place. Inga highlighted how the Baltic Festival was an "… exchange of cultures. It's just meeting new people, and getting new contacts, making friendships, and so on. Wow. Fantastic. That was wonderful." The offer of friendship came on so many levels within the project. Firstly, through the boys' turbulent journey in the studio in Bournemouth where they found through drama a way of working together and becoming good mates, to gaining the confidence to make friends with other teenagers outside of their group and culture by going through something together. There is a vulnerability about performing, sharing what you have created, but this vulnerability also becomes a strength, an offering to the audience, a gift. A gift that transcends barriers as it did in Latvia.

6.4. Pedagogy - The drama process – making a play. The importance of a designated space.

All the interviews demonstrated that the change in the pedagogical approach they experienced through the drama project impacted on their learning. Their involvement in the project challenged aspects of the negativity that had been instilled into the boys. The boys began the project thinking it would be a "buckshee" way of getting out of lessons. Quickly their attitudes changed, and an intense period of work followed that embraced who they were as human beings. The project became more than just making a play, but something bigger. It became a vehicle to confront how they believed they were perceived by others. Through the drama process, they became more than pupils from the naughty boys' school. Dan said they saw the project as a way of showing: "look we just aren't like that, these are struggles, this is what we are fighting against." This was the motivation for them to prove themselves: "it became quite important to us that it was done right - and we did it right ... We didn't mess about with it." Their belief in their play became so strong that, by the time they arrived in Latvia for the festival and came face to face with so-called high culture, even though their play was very different, Darren identified that they:

> …believed in [the] piece … everyone invested in it. So, it, [didn't] really matter that …other people were maybe, doing these classic pieces …'cause we…were doing this thing that we'd created and, we had as much right to be there as anyone else. (Attard, D: 2018)

Dan repeatedly used the words lovey-dovey to describe the other festival performances. These words can be perceived as a configuration of labelling. In so doing, the boys were to an extent conforming to their own negative stereotypes, by their use of language, a dismissal of one form of culture that they felt was not for them. Dan's words suggest that the other plays weren't masculine enough. In contrast, their play '*Til It All Went Wrong* was indeed different – "blunt like a hammer" as Dan put it because they were portraying something real. It became a celebration of who they were: a defiance against society.

The interviews indicate that the drama workshops that took place at the BCCA with the Penwithen Boys were successful because of their holistic approach. The centre offered an atmosphere of inclusivity, in direct contrast to the sense of exclusion they had experienced. For Darren and Nick, a vivid recollection for them was the relaxation exercises within the drama sessions. Darren referred to the exercise as a *guided vision thing,* that would allow them to discover *moments of peace and quiet and stillness.* After all those years the remembrance of an oasis of peacefulness within their turbulent lives has remained. For young people identified with anger issues, this form of relaxation work was an important aspect of the tools that the applied drama had to offer young people who were far from calm. This allowed them to inhabit the drama space and leave their hectic lives behind for a period of time.

> The adolescent period is a critical stage for strengthening neuroplasticity and building cognitive, affective, and social capacities that can support positive changes in school, work and relationships over the lifespan. Recent research has shown that mindfulness meditation has an impact on adolescent brain plasticity including functional and structural changes related to attention control, emotion regulation and self-awareness improvement. (H. lzel *et al*. 2011; Tang *et al.* 2015:75)

The facilitators, mentors from Vita Nova, took the boys seriously. They were the focus of the project; their suggestions, their stories. "Ideas [were] thrown around … what sort of play and what we wanted to do." (Burton, N: 2019). The BCCA was a special, professional and designated theatre space where they could share thoughts and use their music. The drama work "escalated quite quickly… It was a shock to us and a shock to you lot how quickly we sort of adapted to everything and got on with it. And how everyone got on well" (*ibid*). The group realised something was happening; they were creating something, and their behaviour improved; as Nick put it, things: "even in school, sort of, started looking up." Both Nick and Darren noted in their interviews that they could see that taking part was an opportunity. The shift in attitude towards what were called crazy Wednesdays to a focused learning activity came when the group, as Darren stated, took:

> … ownership [of the project] …OK, we're here to work now. You know, we're here 'cause we want to do this project, it's not just like fun time or whatever … [you] almost realised the opportunity of what you were doing. (Attard, D: 2018)

Dan expanded further on the importance of their investment in the play-making process, a piece of theatre that reflected their life experiences. A form of nurturing emerged within the group as the story increasingly grew significant to all of them:

> We kind of made it, it was like our own our little baby, our own little child, we wanted to look after it … so I think it became important to all of us that we did well [in what] we portrayed …I think we put quite a bit of emotional attachment into it. (Stanaway, D: 2018).

Somers highlights the significance of the material selected when working within an applied drama context:

> If the conditions for participant change are to be optimised, effective engagement with the drama and the issues carried within it is essential. The aim is to create a situation in which the participants 'care about' the story and the people within it. Instructing them to care has limited effect. The feeling of involvement, relevance and ownership must be generated by the activity. (Somers, 2008: 67).

The lads from Penwithen and Darren wanted to talk about what was going on for them at that particular time in their lives. This was what they cared about and wanted to discover a form to express it. There is an acknowledgment that for this to happen they needed support. There was a recognition from Dan and Nick that Darren helped them, especially with the rap. Vita Nova gave them advice and from myself and the rest of the team they had assistance: 'We had help we needed the help' (Stanaway, D: 2018). Nick, in his interview, outlined the pedagogical approach he experienced within mainstream school as being a situation of 'lesson, after lesson, after lesson' as compared to the open structure of Penwithen. There students were required to opt into lessons - 'what you put in is what you get out.' (Burton, N: 2019). He understood the value of Penwithen School, as did Dan, in hindsight. At the time both of them had struggled with it. Nick highlights that the teachers sometimes shouted and were condescending. In contrast, he describes the experience with myself as facilitator and the rest of the team at the BCCA that there was a sense of mutual respect and equality: "I think you did what our teachers were trying to do [laughs] … for so many years."
Nick's explanation of the applied drama approach that occurred at the BCCA, can be viewed as an example of Freire's co-intentional education where there is an equality of learning between the teacher and the subject.

> Teachers and students …co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (Freire, 1970: 51).

Freire states that this co-intentional approach leads to committed involvement. All three interviewees affirmed their commitment to the project. However, it should be noted that the project was able to offer this deep involvement with the students as we had freedom of time, flexibility, space, and a strong team. We did not have the constraints of an educational institution. In the school situation, the teachers were also victims of the power struggle that Foucault identifies. They were faced with a clump of young boys who had been failed by mainstream education and then sent to Penwithen. They worked in both challenging and volatile situations on a daily basis.

Map Notes: Levels of understanding

The notion of hope and possibilities was born out in the attitudes of both Inguna and Jan's interviews. They understood that theatre offered the boys an opportunity to share with the public a hidden, positive part of themselves.

I carried out micro semi-structured interviews with volunteer professional artists Jordi [video] and Martin [photography], and, in addition, Larry, a Vita Nova mentor. All three are in recovery and in each case, I have had continued contact with them. They all contributed similar responses which reflected the pedagogical approach of the facilitator and the power of applied drama. Their views are from a non-theatre specialist perspective, as is Graham's, who as mentioned before I had not spoken to for 10 years.

Responses to: What is your strongest memory from the Penwithen Project 2001/2?

> If anything, I gained more trust in the ability of theatre in education to change behaviour and to make young people more self-aware (Jordi Robert: 2020)

> The skill, patience and effort it took to make a safe space in which a usually volatile group could be creative (Coyne M: 2020)

> I can remember at the first session the boys were running about 'acting out'…. using swear words I can't repeat. Then when it was time to listen to you, they quietened down. When you explained what we were about to do in a magical way … the only word I can think of obedient … they all became obedient (Syminster L: 2020).

Responses to: Has anything changed you?

> It helped inform a fundamental shift in my ideas about behavioural change. (Coyne M: 2020).

> Yes, I have a greater understanding of how difficult and complex it is when working with young kids with issues. You have to be terribly committed to work with kids like that. It's a special talent. (Syminster L: 2020).

> You and the way the work was scheduled …the power of drama just amazing, the confidence they gained. Seeing how initially the lads saw me as an authority figure but later more as a friend. The confidence they gained to express themselves in the drama meant, especially for Nick, that he did not see me as an enemy but more a friend (Lambert G: 2020).

The need for professional drama facilitators who can guide people through the drama process and weave sympathetic parties into the holistic mix is vital in the field of applied drama. This is also testified in all of the projects that were explored in Chapter 3: The Landscape. Literature Review 3.1 Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education 2010 3.2. 'Being Other': UK 2015. 3. 3 Cooling Conflict: 1996–2004.

6.5.Intervention, transformation, completion, and praise:

The actual completion of making their play, their sharing it with an audience, going public with what they had made was especially poignant for all three boys. Dan describes what they did as being 'a massive accomplishment'. The separation from mainstream and the ingestion of negative stereotypes led to failure, a sense of abandonment and non-completion of projects. Dan articulated the importance of finishing something, saying: "we created this and … for once we hadn't destroyed stuff. We hadn't ruined it by fighting… Breaking it …being naughty." They went beyond their usual patterns of behaviour, pushing aside how they felt they were expected to behave and more importantly, what they expected of themselves. The completion of their play marries with the notion of relevance and purpose. The project held value for the boys: "We'd get serious and get on with it and put this together." (Stanaway, D: 2018). When Dan again expressed "we built something …instead of destroying stuff," it occurred at a point in his interview when he revealed how he blamed himself for all the difficulties he had undergone and had led him to Penwithen School. Dan had been caught in a vicious and self-perpetuating circle of destruction. The drama project interrupted this continuum. The project transformed a self-fulfilling prophecy of persistent failure into a realisation that they could accomplish and complete something of

worth. The telling of their combined story through theatre proved to be worth fighting for and challenging years of external and internal judgment, by having the courage and self-discipline to perform their play. Darren echoed this sentiment in his narrative, saying he "used to sabotage quite a lot of good stuff by maybe my behaviour." For Darren, the completion of the play was so important: "…. to achieve something and finish it. And it, it be wrapped up on a, on a good note, on a positive note, you know is, is ... is a nice reminder of achievement." Their performances rewarded the group with praise and affirmation from their audiences. The feedback they received from school mates, parents: "I think my mum had a little tear in her eye and, normally when she's got a tear in her eye it's 'cause she's taking me to court." (Burton, N: 2019). Their peers in other schools and the "actual adults" from the British Council, gave them a deep sense of pride.

> Just being asked to go to the Baltic Bell festival was immense … cos it was like when we took it to the hotel in Bournemouth there was people there that was interested in [us] … that were quite important people. (Stanaway, D: 2018).

Nick's metaphor of the shadow, the dark place, is significant as it signals the emotion of shame and echoes Dan's sense of blame. He describes how the impact of the drama project became life-changing. He explains how the intervention of drama became 'a little voice behind your sort of shadow'. Nick discloses that the shadow will stick with you "until you sort of get something … that brings you out of that." In his case, as with the other boys in the group, that intervention was the drama project. Taking part in the project resulted in counteracting the negativity he felt:

> …you get a nice little voice that sort of pats you on the back about it ... you can finally tell yourself that you're doing something good. And I think once you get that, a little bit of light when you've lived in the dark for a while. I think it … can't do anything else but improve your life (Burton, N: 2019).

When I first met Vita Nova, I used the metaphor of a shadowland to describe how they were in the world, like the boys, not wholly existing, not using their talents or embracing their potential. In Jungian terms the shadow archetype is a vital concept in viewing behaviour: 'Jung's shadow contains the repressed contents that we do not want to admit to ourselves — the behaviour we consider bad or evil.' (Mayes, 2005:33). Jung also posits that:

> Sometimes we need to hide our talents, virtues, and potentials which, if we were open about them, we feel we would put ourselves in emotional or social peril. Also residing in the shadow are certain "insufficiently developed functions" *(ibid*: 33).

According to Mayes, within the Jungian view, it is highly important that we face and integrate our shadow, or at least aspects of it, into our conscious awareness and personality. The acceptance of the shadow is necessary:

> One reason to confront the shadow is that some of the dispositions and potentials that one has repressed can, if consciously acknowledged and carefully nurtured, emerge from the shadow and help one become a more complete and powerful person, more whole. To grow into one's full stature as a social, intellectual and moral being by realizing as much of one's potential as possible is the great moral imperative that life lays upon us all. *(ibid* 33).

In the case of the boys, they had to examine their shadows to decide whether they were going to publicly share their story which revealed a great deal of negativity, crime and bullying. Mayes says that when Jung's archetype of the shadow is confronted, it can lead to '[permitting] a more effective, genuine, compassionate, and satisfying existence.' *(ibid* 33). The boys in all three interviews remarked on how they managed to get on with each other with no animosity, which would have been a highly unlikely situation at the beginning of the project. They had been through something together; not just the performance, but the process of revealing their lives to each other. This could be seen as 'what Jung means by becoming whole'. (*ibid* 33).

Their invitation to Latvia can be viewed as the ultimate symbol that they were doing something right. They had been awarded that trip through their hard work.

> To be able to experience something like that, to see something like that through a drama, through a show you have produced, you've put together to show people and have it so welcomed (Stanaway, D: 2018).

In Latvia, they were welcomed, not judged. A level of transformation took place in their gaining cultural capital, but there was, I believe, something else that occurred that was a holistic experience. The lads were at a critical time in their adolescence. They were taken through the project to a completely different place and country. Their eyes were opened to nature, beauty, and love. It was profound; all of them want to return to Latvia, not just to the country but to grasp again that brief period in their lives:

> … I don't know … it's like it's one of those places that I have to go back to before I die. *[*He puts his hand on his heart]. (Attard, D: 2018)

Map Notes: Levels of understanding

Welcome from the Latvians was not only felt by the Penwithen Boys but also strongly by their teachers, Jan and Eileen. They felt they were being cared for right through to the Russian lady who on their late arrival had made them all coffee in a stairwell. Welcoming people is a foundation stone for all applied drama and for that matter community work. The welcome was on all levels for the boys at the BCCA, at the venues they toured, bringing their play home to their school, the Exeter conference and of course to Latvia. But there was also the need, especially on the part of the Baltic Bell to want to give. They saw it as a pleasure to be hospitable. A colleague, Gwyn Jones [41] when I spoke about how important it was for participants to 'give something back to society', especially for the likes of Vita Nova and Penwithen, said "why not say just giving?" His statement made me think. Why does there have to be a reciprocal element to it? Although, within the Twelve Step Narcotics Anonymous (NA) *(see Appendix 6 NA programme*) ' making amends' Step Nine 'to those whom you may have harmed or when circumstances make this act impossible, making 'indirect amends 'such as giving of service to the community. NA states that such actions can lead to 'achieving freedom from the wreckage of our past'. (NA 1982:40). Certainly, there was a strong element of this for Vita Nova and Penwithen. Nick's parents at the performance of *'Til It All Went Wrong* had been happy to see their son doing something productive. However, what Gwyn said has a place in applied drama work as giving doesn't have to be contractual. Just giving comes with no conditions. An element of being human, that maybe we have forgotten. I heard a moving story at the National Drama conference 2018[42] told by Phil Duchene when he spoke about an applied theatre Canadian truth and reconciliation project *No Stepping Back* (2013). The philosophy of indigenous people which he recounted, has stayed with me:

> One of the most important ceremonies in Pacific North West Aboriginal life is potlatch. Potlatches see songs and dances performed, marriages and births announced, a chief's right transferred and children given names. The conclusion of the ceremony is a sharing of goods, the more gifts given by the host, the higher his status. I suppose it's the opposite of capitalism and was banned by the government on pain of prison. A grandmother had shared a story that when she was at residential school and living a segregated life, after lights out, the girls would gather in their dormitory for their own, banned potlatch. They would sit in a circle and give away treasures such as the remains of cookies, pencil stubs and ribbons to each other as cultural remembrances. The nuns who ran the school never knew about it (Duchene 2019:9).

[41] Gwyn Jones Director Association of Sustainability Practitioners www.sustainabilitypractitioners.org
[42] National Drama Conference *Drama Spa* 13-14th April 2018 at Homerton College, University of Cambridge

Following on with this theme of giving I recognise that a space is needed for people to feel able to offer themselves without judgment.

Inga noticed: “one of the boys would always look after little Muiruri.” I spoke about this act of kindness in Chapter 3 p100. Significantly, Inga from Latvia who knew nothing of Nick had also witnessed this. It is the opportunities that applied drama opens for people. Here was Nick whose language regarding race in rehearsals in Bournemouth left something to be desired. On one occasion I had to stop rehearsal. At the time I had not been able to fully address his language issue as I was under pressure to finish the play. Yet in Latvia, his natural-self was instinctively helpful, kind and without prejudice. Nick significantly came back for a few weeks of work experience in the summer of 2002. Fortunately, I was running a project with adult refugees, *Give us a Voice* (*see Chapter 1: 1.3.8 p47*). I told him he could help me with a drama project with adults. I didn't tell him anymore. I spoke to the group first and explained that I had this lovely lad who could work with us, but he was lacking a little knowledge about other cultures. They were glad to have him. They shook his hand when he came and thanked him for his help. Just having the opportunity to work on a piece of drama together was enough. I remember him coming to me after the first meeting rather confused and saying with near astonishment “they are really nice, aren't they?”

Space and time:

I have already noted the importance of a dedicated space such as the BCCA. The impact of travelling to a different country for the boys was significant. So too was Inguna traveling to the UK to discover more about theatre and drama in education.
Inga who had been the boys’ young guide remembers at the 2002 festival the pride she and her group felt as a Latvian performing in a very old theatre. It was important to them as well as the lads.

The timing was significant. Inguna’s quest to interact with western countries was linked to that particular time. This attitude was echoed by Inga, who as a teenager was excited to meet people from England as her previous knowledge was only from films. The boys in turn expected a cold Russian environment but were met with a hot climate, warm welcome, the beauty of Riga and the countryside.

The timing of age was also impactful. The boys were at a very susceptible adolescent age. There they were guided around a beautiful place with lively older teenage girls. Inga eighteen years on commented that she thought Darren liked her:

> I remember Darren wrote a poem to me …it was very, very sweet thing he wrote, like a little rap poem for me straight after their return. Yes. And we exchanged emails…it was more of a friendship and lovely thing to do.

Lost and Found, conclusion:

If I was to say that the outcome of this investigation into the long-term effects of an applied drama project, that occurred over nineteen years, was that the participants accumulated good memories, would that conclusion be a failure? I think not. When you realise how few positive memories a lot of the young people had. For that matter as my research has developed to encompass other projects, such as the moment I recorded earlier in this thesis when a past participant from a treatment centre who had sadly relapsed, talked on the street to a volunteer about the good memories from the Christmas play they had taken part in. Eileen Clews was reminiscing about the drama project just days before she died.
David, the last boy I found said:

> Every now and then I talk to my daughter about it [she has got special needs] and I show her the magazine. I am on the front cover. I tell her that I was actually in a play. It's a really good memory and when my boy is older, I will show him the picture and tell him the story. I was called Spike in the play (Bishop: 2020).

So, there is a strong case to be made for applied drama being the maker of memories. In some cases, such as Darren's, the givers of lost childhoods; a chance to play, at least for a while. However, I believe that this thesis testifies that applied drama can also be instrumental in giving so much more. I am not going to use the words 'just memories' because strong memories alone are powerful outcomes and can sustain the soul. You may be on the streets but you can recall something that can make you smile. As Wilde famously said, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." (Wilde, 1893)

We can truly demonstrate the power of drama in offering people alternative narratives in what they do and in how they think about life. This validates the outcomes of the applied work I identified in Chapter 3 and other work I have been personally involved with and included in this thesis. One of the greatest gifts that applied drama has is acceptance and celebration of difference. How disparate individuals can, through the alchemy of drama, unite and create a piece of theatre that has something meaningful to say about their life stories. The frequent use of the word family by participants I have worked with in myriad settings, in the case of the Penwithen Boys brotherhood proves the necessity for the work. People need to feel they belong. An opportunity for people, through the vehicle of creating a play to feel useful, needed, to be altruistic, and have a purpose in life are constant recurring themes that I have witnessed. These motifs along with the sensation of completion that derives from the element of a public sharing, are for some groups necessary. Almost as a

ritual or, unveiling of self, to be seen and recognised as valuable human beings is a vital outcome of applied theatre.

This thesis found its name as I discovered another aspect of myself as a practitioner. Not only do the groups find their voice but on reflecting on my long journey in applied theatre, I found I have something to say. I had been, as many applied drama workers find themselves, lost in the doing with sadly little time to reflect and evaluate work. Looking back, not just on the Penwithen project but my involvement with so many groups, I have repeatedly spoken of their performances as being authentic, meaning there is a truth in what they have to offer within their stories, that their life experiences transcend and communicate with audiences. What I have come to acknowledge through my autoethnographic exploration is some of those groups see something in me that is also authentic. I believe that is partly why I become accepted within groups. My life story is also visibly opaque.

Incorporation is rooted in my practice; a commitment to allow anyone who wants to be involved just as they are. With the people I have worked with, it is not a case of make do and mend or that some are not suitable, it is a matter of looking and gauging where they are. Inclusivity within applied theatre is an acknowledgment that people's individuality is the kernel of the group. The member from Pilsdon who didn't want to speak became the knowing fool in their play. He gave us silence, which is a fundamental element of the life of that particular community. It was his character that held the chalice. The boy who wouldn't remove his hoody in the Penwithen play became a symbol of the introversion of adolescent youth.

Yes, I have to say that loss runs through this thesis. When working in the field, on one level there has to be an acceptance of that fact. Along with the acceptance that applied drama is not and cannot be a panacea for all social ills. We are drama facilitators. We self-impose and have imposed on us, mainly through funding expectations, that somehow, we can fix what is broken. We can't, and we shouldn't be expected to. Applied drama works as part of a holistic approach to society. A society that needs to stop segregating people; where we give all people equal opportunities, access to education and cultural experience. Jonathan Herbert's book *Accompaniment, Community and Nature* crystallises how people working intensely with groups, trying to fix things can be in danger of burnout. Certainly, in the past I have nearly reached that point. He talks about a 'sustainable way of being with others in community' that is to do with:

> … a mutual sense of interdependence. I stopped trying to help people or change them, I began to let go of my need to be needed by others and to realise that the simple joy of being with others, accepting them for who they were and being as much aware of my own weakness as theirs, brought me a sense of real freedom, built community and fostered belonging.
> (Herbert,2020:65).

Herbert is talking about community life, but it has resonance for applied work and my own practice. In a way applied drama projects are about creating transient communities. Sometimes they last in other forms beyond the project. But while they exist, they become a hub for people to learn through the creative process and all the activity that brings. Through interacting with one another all the benefits we talk about, such as team building and self-esteem come through that possibility and celebrating with others. It has taken me a great deal of time to realise that part of my being a facilitator was in wanting to be needed. It's good to recognize this trait in yourself and know that to be effective you have to take care of yourself. I am getting there. I would advocate that going through some form of autoethnographic investigation is a deeply important aspect of being a rounded applied drama facilitator.

One of the saddest realisations for me looking back over twenty-five years is that I am still working with folk like the Penwithen Boys. Nothing fundamentally has changed for a whole swathe of society. On one level the loss is deeper than before. After all, we are in a climate where the government is arguing over giving free meals to children in a time of pandemic. Through the years, there has been a slow suffocation and dismantling of educational drama. In his review of Roger Wooster's *Theatre in Education in Britain*, Colvill summarises succinctly the historical demise of child-centred drama:

> In 1988 the Tory government brought in the Education Reform Act (ERA). The act was to lay the foundations for the total reversal of the developments in state education since the 1944 Education Act. All the changes in education since: from the National Curriculum, performance related pay, SATs and league tables have been heading towards a definite outcome, the final stages of which [was] the transference of real estate from local authorities to central government under the academisation programme … The immediate effect of ERA was to shift the orientation away from child-centred education to the needs of employers and the markets ... The effect on TIE was devastating, … … schools became dominated with passing exams and tests; senior managers would simply not allow the time, space, or the money for a peripatetic service which did not advance results. LEAs had their funding cut as their role was reduced, TIE services were similarly cut. (Colvill 2015:7).

Ironically, what was recognised by countries outside of the UK, including Inguna's perception from Latvia, as a cultural jewel was being systematically flushed out of this sceptered isle. Since the Penwithen Project in 2001/2, The Bournemouth Centre for Community Arts, the place where the project took place when young people like Darren could be accommodated for work experience, where Vita Nova was born, and so many other important projects *(see Chapter1)* is now shut and most of the building demolished. Penwithen School and the hostel are closed. Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team like so many other TIE groups were shut down and the employees made redundant. TIE and applied drama courses have been cut to the bone at universities, as have the opportunities to focus on becoming a specialist drama teacher; another slow drip deriving from the national curriculum's omitting drama as a core subject. I was fortunate enough in the eighties to be one of just twelve students who for four years studied education and drama. There was then a real investment and acknowledgment of the importance of drama in education; and I had a grant and no worry about loans. It is hard to see how such a valuable project as the Penwithen Boys could happen now. Yet of the four boys I have found, they all appear to be well rounded, settled human beings, all dads and all in employment. This is a result not just for those individuals but society as a whole. We can't say this was all to do with the drama work, but it was certainly a strong contributing factor. I discovered in a pile of papers an email I had printed off from a report written by Eileen after the Penwithen Boys 2004[43] that reflected on the first group (2001/2). She wrote:

> …our drama project … has played a significant role in success stories for young men who have learnt to cope with difficult personal social problems.

After stating this, she said that Dan was serving in Northern Ireland with the Devonshire & Dorset regiment and that David had won the student of the year award for prevocational skills at Bournemouth & Poole College.

> We are not the high-fliers of academia but no longer are our students heading for young offender institutes or prisons. Opening their eyes to European society has given them the permission to move their lives forward, see beyond the bubble of rural Dorset, and to learn to cope with some of the horrendous emotional and social problems they have had to cope with during their short lives. (Eileen Clews email 6.6.04)

[43] Penwithen took part in the Baltic Bell 2004 with a different group of boys inspired by the first tranche. Their play was called *'No Fear'*

I don't know about the other three Penwithen Boys. I have heard rumours that Bradley, the boy who did not make it to Latvia, that his life sadly hasn't worked out so well. For him, we may discover the project was a good memory.

What is found is the emergence of solid evidence of a recognition that the major contributing factor to the success of this project was to do with principles of applied drama and theatre for development; the impact that drama work can have on individuals and their communities and conversely, how, through the applied drama process, we can create communities, as people unite in the creative endeavour of making a play.
The term applied drama/theatre is relatively new; but it serves, as an umbrella term, for a great deal of amazing work in the field. It holds us in a common shared desire to include people and to give people hope, possibilities through theatre and drama work. It stands as resistance to writing people off and silencing them into the shadow land. It serves as dialogue. It stands as a form of humanity in a society that seems to have forgotten at times what that means.

I hope in some way this thesis will encourage the government to reclaim the value of educational and community drama as an offer for all, not some. That there is a real investment in training applied teachers/facilitators and creating dedicated spaces. Those four boys we know about from Penwithen are also symbols of thousands of participants from applied drama projects nationally and internationally who over the years, led by stoic facilitators, have found themselves and have been named. This contribution needs to be invested in and recognised.

I am still looking for Bradley. Hundreds of people go missing every day, get lost in the shadow land. Sometimes rejected by school and society; sometimes lost in flimsy boats in treacherous seas in the pursuit of finding a safe place where they are accepted.
But I want to find Bradley, the one who hasn't fared so well. I would like to take all seven boys, now men, back to Latvia and to make a documentary film of this story as I think more people beyond the world of academia need to know the value of applied theatre. It is my hope. Without hope, nothing much happens. With hope there are possibilities.

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Appendix 1: Definition of Autoethnography taken from Autoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research (Adams et all, 2015:1)

- Uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.
- Acknowledges and values a researcher's relationships with others.
- Uses deep and careful self –reflection –typically referred to as 'reflexivity"- to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and political.
- Shows "people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles".
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion and creativity.
- Strives for social justice and to make life better.

Appendix 2: DICE Competences

Competences:

No1. Communication in the mother tongue*

Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts – education and training, work, home and leisure, according to their specific needs and circumstances.

** It is recognised that the mother tongue may not in all cases be an official language of the Member State, and that ability to communicate in an official language is a pre-condition for ensuring full participation of the individual in society. Measures to address such cases are a matter for individual Member States.*

No2. Learning to learn

'Learning to learn' is the ability to pursue and persist in learning. Individuals should be able to organise their own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. Competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to handle obstacles in order to learn successfully. It means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts – at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

No3. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence

These competences cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.

2 Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 18 December 2006, on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006].

No4. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day to day life at home and in society, employees in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by entrepreneurs establishing social or commercial activity.

No5. Cultural expression

Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts. Self-

expression through the variety of media [...]. Skills include also the ability to relate one's own creative and expressive points of view to the opinions of others. [...]

A strong sense of identity is the basis for respect and [an] open attitude to diversity of cultural expression.

The partners in the project have also added a sixth competence to reflect our practice and to accompany the other five:

No6. All this and more...

The No6 on our DICE incorporates the first five but adds a new dimension because educational theatre and drama is fundamentally concerned with the universal competence of what it is to be human. An increasing concern about the coherence of our society and developing democratic citizenship requires a moral compass by which to locate ourselves and each other in the world and to begin to re-evaluate and create new values; to imagine, envisage, a society worth living in, and living with a better sense of where we are going with deep convictions about what kind of people we want to be.

DICE –(2010) *Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education*: COMENIUS

Appendix 3: DICE -brief summary of outcomes.

Taken from section 'C' Recommendations of DICE 2010 p50: Outcomes from participants who had been involved with DICE compared with peers who had not been participating in any educational theatre and drama programme:

The theatre and drama participants:

1. are assessed more highly by their teachers in all aspects,
2. feel more confident in reading and understanding tasks,
3. feel more confident in communication,
4. are more likely to feel that they are creative,
5. like going to school more,
6. enjoy school activities more,
7. are better at problem solving,
8. are better at coping with stress,
9. are more tolerant towards both minorities and foreigners,
10. are more active citizens,
11. show more interest in voting at any level,
12. show more interest in participating in public issues,
13. are more empathic: they have concern for others,
14. are more able to change their perspective,
15. are more innovative and entrepreneurial,
16. show more dedication towards their future and have more plans,
17. are much more willing to participate in any genre of arts and culture, and not just performing arts, but also writing, making music, films, handicrafts, and attending all sorts of arts and cultural activities,
18. spend more time in school, more time reading, doing housework, playing, talking, and spend more time with family members and taking care of younger brothers and sisters. In contrast, they spend less time watching TV or playing computer games,

19. do more for their families, are more likely to have a part-time job and spend more time being creative either alone or in a group. They more frequently go to the theatre, exhibitions and museums, and the cinema, and go hiking and biking more often,
20. are more likely to be a central character in the class,
21. have a better sense of humour,
22. feel better at home.

DICE –(2010) *Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education*: COMENIUS

Appendix 4: Extended extracts from 'Son of Vita Nova 2002' (Report 1)

3.2 &4.3.6 Original aims and objectives for the Penwithen Project

Aims, objectives, and measures of success

- To improve the self-esteem of the students by participating in the drama /theatre project.
- To build on their ability to work as a team and develop social skills, self-confidence, and a sense of self-worth.
- To provide a theatre in education framework for peer-led education that offers mutual benefits to all participants and teachers.
- To foster and develop self-esteem and positive behaviour patterns in pupils leading to improved educational standards.
- To challenge stereotypes and myths about young offenders.
- To enable students of different ages to meet and learn from each other.
- To raise the profile of Penwithen school through the creation of a drugs education play.
- To involve those in recovery from Vita Nova to encourage dialogue between themselves and the drama.
- To give those from Vita Nova an opportunity to develop skills of mentoring and facilitation.

- **Objectives**
- To create a play to be shared with Penwithen students and parents and taken to junior schools about the problems surrounding drug use.
- To allow the young people of Penwithen to talk further to Vita Nova about the nature of drug abuse.
- To create a video diary of the project.
- To enable the students to gain more knowledge and understanding about the possible dangers of drug misuse through the process of informing people younger than themselves.
- To provide drama /theatre INSET for staff.
- To give students the opportunity to work with professional artists.
- To give students the chance to work in a professional space i.e. The Bournemouth Centre For Community Arts.

Did we fulfil our aims and objectives?

I believe that we did fulfil all our aims and objectives. We had originally intended to make a play for younger children. The group at the beginning were adamant that they did not want to perform for their peers. There was a whole list of schools that 'no way' would they perform there and the thought of performing at Penwithen was almost unthinkable. However, very soon we realised that we were making a play for teenagers. As time went on the creation of a 'cool' play made the group feel confident and quite willing to share their work with their peers.

(Coyne, 2002: 3)

4.3.7 The mentors

Vita Nova Mentors

Became:

1.Good examples of people who have managed successfully to rebuild their lives.
2. They had similar backgrounds to the boys and therefore could empathise easily with them and the boys could identify with them.
3.They were able to give real information about drugs misuse if asked.
4.Like the young men they were non-actors who learnt drama and theatre skills to enable them to tell their stories.
5.On one level they gave me a little physical support, even though of course the boys were well supported by their teachers.
6.For the mentors to enable them to gain skills through doing this work which may be useful in their future careers.

The young boys felt comfortable with these three role models. In fact when one of them was not able to come the group was worried. I think this was an insecurity thing with them. Their support was invaluable as they were able to empathise with the group. Of course in the case of drugs use which was constantly coming up, it was particularly useful. It was a real probability that several of the groups are inactive lie using some form of substance. Our approach was to work with the group when these issues came up and to focus on the creative process and not preach to them. But they were all aware that what they said was in confidence and they could speak if they wanted.

After each session, the mentors and myself would feedback on what we had done and how we could move forward.

4.3.12 Extract form Report Conclusions

Responses from teachers
Jan Morgan:
These boys have been able to enter a completely different way of learning through the directorship of Sharon they have produced a powerful and worthy drama, which has been a privilege for me to watch develop.

Eileen Clews:

I always felt that drama was a medium through which Penwithen pupils could achieve more. Drama was used successfully 15 years ago but the National Curriculum was implemented and a more formal education was thought to be the way forward. Unfortunately, it has not addressed many emotionally damaged boys. Drama at BTiE has given this group of boys success which they never believed they could achieve. They have had to learn to live with this success at school, which they sometimes have found difficult.

It has been amazing to watch them develop a belief in themselves, that they have the potential to achieve- perhaps it may seem late in their education and we should start this at a very much earlier age. The most important thing is these boys can go forward, learn, and achieve.

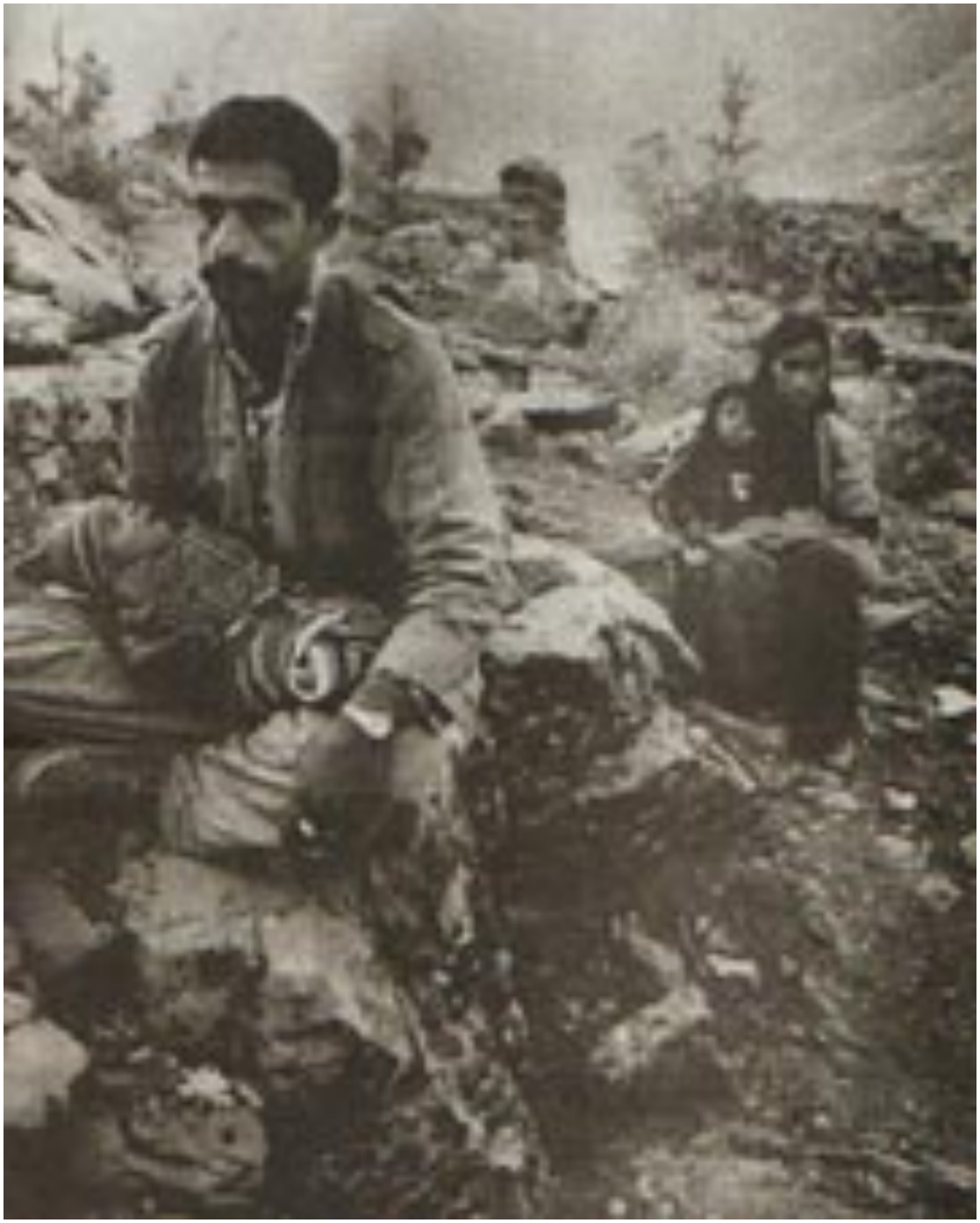
The support and pride from their Headteacher Sally Downs also made our work possible. When engaging in such work it cannot happen in isolation only with the embracement of the whole school.

Use of video

Multimedia was very important. I had worked on some parts of the script by watching some of the rehearsals on video. Watching the footage back surprised me. Some of the sessions were so difficult, that it was good after a break to be able to look at I the work objectively. For example, in the sessions, I talk about previously the level of engagement we had after the lunch break was it in fact very high than I had thought, the words Dan had used for the death of his friend were strong and flowing.

Film was absolutely the right medium to use with the group. It was immediate and Jodie worked on some of the ideas of the story and interpreted them so we were able to see a passage of time how the friendship was between Ice and D. We were able to use film to express feelings and paint a picture of the world that these young people inhabit.

Appendix 5 Image of refugee.



Dispossessed Kurdish Family, Guardian 20th Feb 1999
Photographer: Paul Driscoll

Appendix 6:12 Step Programme Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

https://www.recovery.org/support-groups/narcotics-anonymous/

NA: Although the organization was originally founded to counter narcotic abuse and addiction, NA now welcomes anyone who is trying to overcome any type of drug or alcohol dependence. NA began as an offshoot of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The 12-step NA recovery program was designed to parallel the one implemented by AA, and it was meant to be a recovery pathway with all participants following a set of guidelines and supporting each other's efforts to stay clean.[3]

NA is an anonymous 12-step system. It offers a safe space where members do not have to give their name or any other identifying information. The program is open to people of all ages, races, sexual orientations, and religions.

Written by Editorial Staff Edited by Kindra Sclar, M.A. | last updated 14 November 2019

The 12 Steps of NA

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction; that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Appendix 7: Scenario of *Scratchin `the Surface*

SCENE ONE: *Jay `s Monologue*
Jay a 25-year-old man looks back on the choices he made ten years before and the concequences of those choices.
Jay Everything in life can be put down to experience …but some experiences are more painful than others .My experiences started about ten years ago with raves …free parties …festivals …by the way my name is Jay.
SCENE TWO: Setting *Up* Retrospective Jay is now 15 .We see him with his best friend Acer setting up the decks for a party/rave .Jay is infatuated with the whole club scene and is acting as a Gofer for the slightly aging DJ Ginger. Ginger promises JAY he can call out the names of the artists after going back on his word when he promised JAY he could do a set. JAY reluctantly takes the inferior option.
SCENE THREE: *Club 1* Big club night where ginger is King
The chub music stops a heart beat is heard .The character of RAVEN enters. RAVEN is the symbol of addiction . He talks to the audience and tells them he is looking for some one. The focus then shifts to JAY . Jay gets his moment of glory by shouting out the names of the other artists . When he leaves the stage RAVEN slaps JAYS hand this is the first touch the first contact with RAVEN .RAVEN is excited .
SCENE FOUR Dad 1.Raven is sitting in the audience watching .
JAY returns hoe very late DAD is waiting up for him .DAD is worried about his son .JAY annoyes his DAD by turning the sterio up loud .JAY askes his DAD if he can borrow some money .His father gets upset as this is not the first time he has asked for money . JAY starts blagging lying that he needs the money for a school trip .
JAY**:***I need some money …I need some money for a school trip*
(SD Raven responds to the homogenous meaning of the word trip in this case a drug trip and moves across the stage laughing to himself) .
He starts to emotionally black mail hios DAD so you want me to drop out of college
SCENE FIVE Bedroom scene
Raven seduces Jay .Symbolically Raven and Jay are lying together . Raven promised Jay that he can help him to fly if he stays with him
Raven : *I understand you Jay .Io can take care of you ,get you higher than you`ve ever been before we can do it togther , you and me .*

The *break in scene*
Characters Jay, Acer, Dad, Raven and the chorus
The *break in scene* is in part a repetition of the much earlier scene Dad *One* where 16 year old *Jay* is already showing the early signs of drugs misuse such as elation from the use of chemicals, restlessness, wanting to be on his own, loss of appetite, the use of manipulation in obtaining money from his father.
The Break in scene shows the later stages of 16-year-old Jay's drug use. Now there is no elation for him, only anger that he wants and needs more drugs .His craving are pushing him into the world of crime. He comes back to his house late at night with his friend *Acer* who in contrast is *high* on his pills.
The chorus who are situated at the back of the audience echoes firstly Acers eauphia and then shifts to echoing Jay's frustration with his friend.
The *Raven* (addiction) always present looks on from the audience.
Jay attempts to steal his father's video he involves the unwitting Acer to assist in the crime. Jays father interrupts them. Jay's Dad calls Acer! Acer runs out of the house. Chris confronts his son who tries to *blag* his way out of the situation.
Frustrated at a trail of misbehaviour from Jay his Dad has run to the end of his patients and throws Jay out of the home. Finally Dad addresses the audience. Saying he doesn't known what to do any more. That he can't cope.

Appendix 8: Scenario of *'Til It All Went Wrong*

A play by devised **by the Penwithen Boys drama group and Sharon** Coyne Bournemouth Theatre in Education Team June 2002.

It was a multi media piece with film and rap music from the time weaving in and out of the action.

'Til It All Went Wrong' is a short play about power struggles within a gang. The leaders are 'D' and Ice but Smokey wants Ice's place. Rapping is important to the group. Ice Dan and Smokey see themselves as cool rappers. Dopey is a gang member who just hangs out with them he comments every so often. He wears his hoody up all the time until very close to the end of the play. When seeing Ice's dead body he looks at him takes back his hood and says:

DOPEY ' I knew this would happen '

Micky and DMX want to join the group. Spike reluctantly asks to join as he doesn't want to look a 'wuz' .To join they are asked by 'D ' and Ice what they can give them. Micky has fags and can drum. DMX says he will get them decks and CDs. Spike is unsure what he can get and says he will get 'stuff'.
DMX and Spike have to steal to get the 'stuff'.

Spike hasn't shoplifted before. Under DMXs guidance Spike attempts to steal CDS but he is caught by the shopkeeper and ends up being interrogated by the police.

'D' and Ice drift apart as Ice becomes addicted to drugs and starts being either absent or late for practicing the rap with the gang. Smokey quickly moves into taking Ice's place.
When Ice eventually turns up there is a fight between Ice and Smokey
'D' separates them and then draws a knife and telling Ice:

'D' 'I thought of you as my brother but this is
where it ends. No way, I tell you Ice, this is
where it ends. It's over.

Ice has changed and he isn't part of the gang anymore.
Ice is seen rapping on his own

ICE : I'm turnin' into a thug
Coz I'm doing' the drug
I need some help
Cos of the card I got dealt

Ice has taken an over dose and he collapses.

'D' finds Ice and reminisces about how as kids they played together how they dreamt of being rap stars''. He leaves Ice's body.
DMX , Dopey and Micky find Ice. Smokey also enters the scene. Realising he is probably dead they all leave him except for Smokey. It is only Smokey who stays with him and calls the ambulance.

SMOKEY So it's just you and me. Who's left now, where's 'D', Dopey, all the gang. It was all a game wasn't it? One big game, but no-one won. I wanted to be you, but not this! *(pause)* Sorry

Time has passes and we see ‘D’ in the park sitting alone. Spike enters. ‘D’ tries to talk to him and offers him a fag. Spike is no longer interested in joining the gang .His time in the police cell got him thinking .He wants a different life. He is going to college.
The play ends with ‘D’ sitting alone

Appendix 9:Abridged extract from An Excluded Community: Can Theatre Make a Difference?

This extract gives an insight into how this specific community theatre group, Vita Nova, emerged and why they, in particular, connected with the lads at Penwithen.

Abridged extract from An Excluded Community: Can Theatre Make a Difference?

Collectively, in 1999, seven recovering drug addicts and I, as co-director of Bournemouth Theatre in Education (BTIE)[44] team, created a play about the human cost of drug misuse, entitled *Scratchin' the Surface*. Originally the piece was devised for young people, but we soon realised the potential of the play for a much wider audience. The effect of the play and the post-play discussion on both the performers and audience was profound and of immeasurable benefit to the cast. Evidence showed that audiences thought about the consequences of drug and alcohol misuse, thought about their mortality and this prompted a debate about emotions and relationships whenever the group performed. We know that, after the play, some young people made decisions not to take drugs; whether they stuck to their resolve long term we cannot tell but this was their intention.
Our journey to becoming a respected community theatre group and, latterly, an after-care facility wasn't easy, but it was exciting. At this point I will use Van Erven's definition of community theatre which displays:

> …a broad range of performance styles. It is united by its emphasis on local and /or personal stories (rather than pre-written scripts) that are first processed through improvisation and then collectively shaped into theatre under the guidance either of outside professional artists (who may or may not be active in other kinds of professional theatre) or of local amateur artists residing among groups of people who, for lack of a better term, could perhaps best be called "peripheral". Community theatre yields grass roots performances in which the participating community residents themselves perform and during the creative process of which they have substantial input. (Van Erven, 2001:2)

Very early on in my work with Vita Nova I realised the importance of what we were doing, how the process was impacting on all our lives, on the group as participants and myself as facilitator. I have become convinced that Applied Drama and the ultimate creation of a piece of theatre can offer so much in terms of dignity, humanity, acceptance of one's past, self-worth and purpose to those who actively take part in it. For the audience, it gives hope, empathy, understanding and a real insight into who an addict is and where drug or alcohol abuse can lead people.

[44] Bournemouth TIE (BTiE) was a long- standing professional theatre team made up of teacher/actor facilitators. They provide a high quality service of educational drama and theatre to schools and community groups in Dorset and beyond. Sadly it was victim to Government cuts in 2009.

Theatre has the capacity to bring people out of the 'shadow-lands'. This is a metaphor I have used in conjunction with Vita Nova to capture how I perceive many people in recovery to be in a grey place, which they inhabit because they are afraid to be fully part of society.

"I thought people would judge me for what I have done." (Dave, VN, 20.3.99)

I had invited a group of volunteers who were in recovery to work with me, having interviewed several people from a local needle exchange for a previous TIE programme. It occurred to me, that to devise a drugs education programme, I would go straight to people who had been genuinely involved in drug abuse, the notion being that young people would listen to those who had first-hand experience. It has been put to me that this was a form of *method acting*[45] in reverse. Here the participants have the life experience but not the theatrical skills. It would be my task to give them these skills. … I had not considered the impact of the drama work on the volunteers. The project was having a positive effect on the participants as well as the audience, so much so that the group, which became Vita Nova, continued, despite immense problems. … …

The organic and intense way that Vita Nova unfolded meant that I was very much involved in the process. As it developed my role grew and I pushed the boundaries of the role of facilitator. I found myself working in a way not typical of the kind of work I previously had undertaken as a member of BTIE. As a practitioner and facilitator, working with Vita Nova became the most challenging work I had undertaken in terms of discovering how using the right methods can unlock people's creativity. It also gave the group the opportunity to look with a new perspective at their lives and ultimately to a place of acceptance from which they can move on. I learnt about the phenomenon of addiction and the important role drama can have in aiding people's on-going recovery, alongside a programme of recovery such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). How this knowledge is transferable, to a degree at least to other groups, in particular young people with emotional and behavioral problems (EBP)[46]. I began to understand the significance of the role of facilitator and the possibilities of creating new forms of community. Importantly, I have learnt to recognise my own limitations, such as becoming too deeply involved with projects, which is an irony as most of the work with participants is to do with protecting them by using forms of 'distancing'.

(Coyne, 2007:10)

[45] Method Acting: American adaptation of Stanislavski 's teaching on acting and directing stressing mainly the building of the role rather than the technical side of its presentation. The Penguin Dictionary of Theatre. (1966) Penguin Books Ltd p183

[46] EBP: Emotional and Behavioural Problems. The Local Authority statements children with specific needs e.g. EBP. Recently the term has changed from EBP to BESD, Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties.